

Gourmet 361

Chapter 361: Ellie's Pinnacle

After following the carriage, the Black Dragon Order arrived in a small territory called Avecker Territory, with an average population of 2,000.

“Luo.”

“Yes?” Luo asked curiously as she looked at Xu Jiaqi.

“You should start broadcasting now,” Xu Jiaqi, Black Dragon Order's second ranked individual, said while pulling out her mask and covering half of her face. The members of the Black Dragon Order immediately followed suit and pulled up their masks that reached the bottom of their eyes.

“R... right now?” Luo asked with uncertainty. Were they telling her to broadcast how they were going to slaughter NPCs? She tried to persuade them, “Scenes showing the slaughter of NPCs could garner the ire of the masses. I think it's more than enough to start the broadcast once Ellie appears and show the world how you hunt her...”

However, no matter how much Luo said, the expressions of the members of the Black Dragon Order did not change. In the end, her words faded into nothing. Xu Jiaqi said coldly, “If we start the broadcast here, we can use the players' mouths to get to Ellie faster. If that happens, she will come out quickly. Besides, a provocative video will attract more viewers, right?”

“...”

Even if Luo wanted to deny it, this was the sad and undeniable truth. The viewers were definitely fond of provocative and thrilling videos. Viewers would definitely come to her channel to watch and see Ellie appear. They might curse and blame them for their tactics, but it was also true that they would continue to watch them. So, Luo thought, *‘There's no way that an Empress would come just because of one small territory, right? These...’*

Their idea was to turn this land in Eivelis Empire into a wasteland. They intended to slaughter one, two, three, and many more until she appeared. Besides, they all had their masks up so it did not matter.

However, the name *‘Black Dragon Order’* would be included in the title of the broadcast. They might be operating unofficially, but they already had a notorious reputation. A group that would do anything for money, that was the Black Dragon Order.

“Then, then let's start filming.”

Luo was one of China's best BJs. She quickly turned on her camera and started broadcasting. The title of the broadcast was *‘The Black Dragon Order Hunting Sword Emperor Ellie’*. Just like any other BJs, Luo's broadcasts always guaranteed enough fun and interesting content. So, the moment she turned on her camera and started broadcasting, a considerable number of viewers flooded in her channel.

That was not all, she even had a provocative broadcast title. The viewers' interest towards her broadcast was bound to be greater, especially after Berdk was recaptured and taken away from China's grasp not too long ago.

[We can always trust Miss Luo's broadcast so let's watch it!]

[The Black Dragon Order Hunting Sword Emperor Ellie? You're going to hunt the Empress? That's crazy shit.]

[But, I don't see Ellie anywhere?]

Sword Emperor Ellie was already standing in the spotlight for a lot of groups and players all over the world. The biggest contributors to her fame and popularity were her beauty and charm. Her glamorous appearance was comparable to Saintess Loyna's! However, compared to Saintess Loyna, Ellie had always exuded a cold and dangerous aura, an aura with a unique charm that captivated most people.

As the broadcast began, shocking scenes appeared on the screens of the viewers.

The muscular giant Arcas was the Black Dragon Order member that learned the '*Pinnacle*' related to close combat. However, his skill level was not yet at a high level, since he only recently learned the skill. Even though that was the case, the power of his skill was still beyond anyone's imagination. That very same Arcas swiftly moved to break the neck of the guard stationed at the entrance of the village.

Crack—

"What... what the hell?! You bastard!"

Slam—

Arcas punched his huge fist towards the guard that rushed to his side.

Bang—!

The guard's head exploded to pieces. Thankfully, Luo had set a '*For 19-year-olds and above only*' restriction when she started her broadcast. Just like that, the horrendous and appalling slaughter by the Black Dragon Order began.

"Kyaaaaaaaack!"

"Uwaaaaaaaack!"

"Keheok!"

The members of the Black Dragon Order killed everything and everyone in sight. They even went so far as to look for the people hiding in inns, houses, and inconspicuous places, and wasted no time in slaughtering them. When the doors were locked, they would just set the entire building on fire.

Crackle!

The citizens of the territory died helplessly under their hands without knowing what was happening.

[What are they doing right now?]

[Wow... It's an NPC massacre, hehehehehe?]

[You can still laugh? No, more than that, why are they doing something like that?]

[They're NPCs anyway. What are you thinking? Aren't you taking things too seriously?]

[That, that might be true but... still, that's a bit... they still show the curiosity and personality that a normal human has.]

[What do you mean by personality? Kahahahaahaha! Kill more! More, more, more, more! Slaughter them all!]

Spaces that encourage anonymity were truly terrifying places. They were places that breed the hidden and darkest desires of a person. There were plenty of people that lived normally by hiding their ugly and hideous natures. Someone that looked completely normal inside a company setting might very well be someone that would curse celebrities to die on the internet.

What more inside *Athenae*, a virtual reality game that these people could play wildly in? It became a place where they could manifest the hideous nature that they had hidden in reality and act out their darkest desires.

Then, the troops of the territory appeared.

“Bastards!!! How dare you do something like that here!!!”

“Kill those that dared to wreak havoc inside our territory!!!”

“You're in trouble,” Arcas said, face crumpling at the sight of the hundreds of soldiers that appeared in front of them. However, his hands were still moving calmly.

A scarlet circle suddenly appeared at that moment. The scarlet circle spread out and sucked in the soldiers that moved to attack the Black Dragon Order.

“Keheok!”

“Ugh, urrrrrk!”

The soldiers tried to grab onto something, the trees, the rocks, the pillars, even the ground. But they were still sucked into that red circle as if they were being dragged inside a whirlpool. The moment the captain of the guards got sucked inside the circle, Arcas clenched his open palms tightly.

Splat—

Splat—

Splat—

Splat—

Splat—

Then, the bodies of their enemies burst into pieces.

“Hohohohoho! These soldiers can't even last 30 seconds against us!” Xu Jiaqi laughed shrilly.

Upon the arrival of the troops, hope had bloomed on the faces of the citizens of the territory. However, it quickly disappeared into smoke, as despair and gloom fell on them. The Black Dragon Order continued the massacre that was briefly interrupted by the arrival of the soldiers.

“How about killing one every five minutes until Ellie shows up?”

“That’s not a bad idea.”

The Black Dragon Order captured all of the remaining villagers and herded them into the middle of the plaza. They numbered around 700. Then, Xu Jiaqi turned to look at Luo, who was broadcasting the scene, before declaring, “Ellie, if you don’t show up, we will kill one of them every five minutes.”

Then, Xu Jiaqi cut off one of the middle aged men’s neck.

Spurt!

“Ho...honey!!!” The man’s wife clutched the man’s body as she screamed loudly. Even the young baby cried loudly over his father’s death.

However, in the eyes of Xu Jiaqi and the members of the Black Dragon Order, they were nothing more than artificial intelligence that could be easily disposed of.

The Korean reporters immediately wrote and sent out articles about the Black Dragon Order infiltrating Eivelis Empire, slaughtering the NPCs and taking a territory hostage.

[Who are the Black Dragon Order? They’re a group that will do anything for money.]

[The Korean Ranker Destroyer, Hu Yitian. Is he also a member of Black Dragon Order?]

[The Black Dragon Order’s wicked acts. There’s more than meets the eye...]

Countless articles were written about them, while the players of Eivelis Empire seethed in anger.

[Bastards! How could they do something like that in broad daylight?!]

[They’re making fun of our country, right?]

[I saw the video and it’s really terrible. They’re killing indiscriminately. They would even kill children, women and the elderly.]

[But they’re just NPCs, you know?]

[They might just be NPCs but mister, did you not laugh, chat and dine with those NPCs while you were playing the game? That’s their world.]

[Are you being serious? Will you even stop killing monsters just because you feel pity for them?]

The people were divided into two factions. One faction believed ‘*They’re just NPCs anyway.*’,? while the other believed? ‘*Still, that’s too much.*’. However, the majority was leaning towards the former.

Either way, they were just NPCs. The players all had a different mindset from them, and began to move quickly.

[I'm Rocker, a Level 253 warrior player. I'm currently in the vicinity of Avecker Territory where the NPCs are being slaughtered. We're thinking of going straight to Avecker Territory to save their citizens.]

[I'm a Level 341 mage player. I'm also going straight to Avecker Territory.]

[I'm a Level 390 assassin player. I'm already hiding near Avecker Territory to watch the situation and what our enemies are doing. They're killing a person every five minutes.]

[There are already around 80 players gathering near the vicinity of Avecker Territory.]

[There are around 30 players from Quad Village coming on their way to join you.]

[I'm the merchant, Another. We're willing to support the Avecker Territory Recapture Operation with all the potions and scrolls that you will use during the operation.]

[This is Aeios Guild Master. We only have thirty priests, but we're currently building a small temple near the vicinity of Avecker Territory. We will immediately head to Avecker Territory to give buffs and heals.]

In a short time, the number of players that gathered together to head to Avecker Territory reached almost 300. The range of their levels might be varied, but there were still a few high-leveled players among them. This was understandable, since the hunting grounds surrounding Avecker Territory were only for novice and advanced players.

[Ah. I want to go too, but I'm too far away.]

[I'm also a bit further away, but I'm going to hurry to get there.]

[I'm on my way there too. Yep, yep... The players are all on their way there.]

Avecker Village was one of the few special villages where the players could not move to using warp or return scrolls. Aside from the fact that it was a remote area, the terrain that they had to pass through to go there was also quite difficult to traverse.

But, there was one thing that was for sure, there were already more than a thousand players heading to Avecker Territory. Considering that most of the players were concentrating on the Continent Cloud, this was already a significant number of players.

Then, someone asked.

[Guys, just looking at your levels which are at the 200s and the 300s, do you think you even have a chance to beat them? If you go there, you'll just die and drop all your items, artifacts, and even your level. Are you all morons?]

[Why are you even going? You'll get slaughtered if you go there anyway. Besides, if you go, the Chinese will just mock us.]

[Why am I going there? I once finished a blacksmith class transfer trial in Avecker Territory. The owner of the smithy there gave me a sword and armor as a gift because I'm just a novice.]

[Even if we get slaughtered there, we can still drag the time and might even be able to buy those NPCs more chances of survival.]

[We just don't want to stay silent when those Chinese are doing something like that. At most, we'll just receive some penalty after dying while fighting against them.]

[Our nation's citizens are all amazing. Just like what we did during the Gold-collecting Campaign, and during the 2002 World Cup when we all waved our Korean Flag while wearing red shirts. And the same is true right now. Our country's teamwork is amazing!]

That was right. The Black Dragon Order would face very unexpected opponents this time around.

“Over there!!!”

“Bastards!!!”

Voices rang loudly from all over the Avecker Territory. After watching the broadcast, numerous players united and advanced to Avecker Territory together.

Baaaaaang—!

The mages cast their fire magic, while the archers shot their arrows.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

Dozens of arrows rained down on their enemies.

However, with just one wave of Xu Jiaqi's arm, these magic spells and arrows stopped right in front of the Black Dragon Order.

“*Gasp!*”

“What... what the hell?!”

Another swing of Xu Jiaqi's arm and the magic and arrows were returned to their owners. She was the holder of the Legendary Class ‘Master Reflector’. Just like that, the arrows and magic that the players sent engulfed them.

Baaaaaang—!

Stab! Stab!

“Bastards! Don't even think about touching the citizens of the territory!”

“Die!!!”

Still, the Korean players never stopped. Even the close combat players gathered together and rushed at them like a tide. Among them were the Level 511 Rukawo and Eden. Rukawo and Eden were a famous ranker couple. The couple started playing together and eventually grew strong and became rankers. They were considered among the top rankers in Korea, and were very loved by many players.

The two might be a lovey dovey couple, but they constantly bickered about the most trivial things while playing the game! The man, Rukawo, was a knight class player. The woman, Eden, was a mage class player. They were rankers that were well-received by other players, since they covered each other's shortcomings during hunts. And right now, the two of them were left in frustration after seeing the huge gap with their enemies.

“O... Oppa... The enemies are too strong.”

“...Goddamnit!”

The Black Dragon Order members were too strong for the coalition that aimed to eradicate the Black Dragon Order. And this was considering Rukawo and Eden were already included. And the worst part was that they had not shown their all yet. However...

“Let’s still do it.”

“Yeah.”

...the two were not afraid. The high-leveled mage Eden could cast high-tiered magic! Rukawo immediately dashed ahead of the other players, rushing at the Black Dragon Order.

“Let’s get rid of these Black Dragon Order bastards!!!”

“Die!!!”

The members of the Black Dragon Order snickered, as they watched them run around in front of them.

“The small fries are getting too excited.”

“This is fun.”

Then, Arcas slammed his fist on the ground strongly.

Baaaaaaang—

A powerful shockwave erupted and engulfed all of the players that entered the territory.

[You have been subjected to a Halting Wave.]

[You will be stunned for four seconds.]

“Hi, hiiiiik...!”

“This... this is ridiculous!”

Hundreds of players, including the high-leveled Rukawo, fell into a stunned state. This was an unbelievable debuff ability! Then, Xu Jiaqi moved. She slowly trudged forward, while spilling gas on the villagers from the oil can in her hands.

Shwaaaaa—

The villagers were also affected by the Halting Wave. She took this opportunity to cover them with gas. Then, Xu Jiaqi took out a match.

“What grudge do you have with us?”

“Ugh... aaaaack...!”

“W... waaaaaaaaah!”

“Aaaaaaack! N, no!!! Spare us! Please!!!”

“Uwaaaah, uwaaaah!”

The Korean players were plunged into anxiety and frustration as the Black Dragon upped their ante and became more brutal in dealing with the villagers upon their arrival.

“We’ll continue to do this. Anyway, this is Eivelis Empire’s village and territory,” She smiled wickedly as she lit the match in her hand. No, she tried to, because when she was about to light it...

Tik—

Swoosh—

...something brushed past her hand as red blood dripped down the ground. Xu Jiaqi turned her head around and saw the existence that they never thought would come. That single move overshadowed the words of the people that said that the Empress would never move just because of a mere hundreds of people.

There were hundreds of knights wearing full plate armor, with the symbol of the phoenix on them. Standing in front of these knights was a woman with fluttering red hair, and she was wearing bright red armor. This was the person that threw the dagger at Xu Jiaqi’s hand. Ellie, the Sword Emperor, had come. Ellie slowly tied her bright red hair with a hair tie and...

Shiiiiing—

...pulled out her bright red sword from its sheath. Ellie walked slowly as she declared, “Keep your hands off of my people...”

The corners of Xu Jiaqi’s mouth awkwardly curled up. She tried to laugh her words off, but she could not do so. The murderous intent that Ellie was emitting had tightly bound their limbs.

Then, Ellie finished her words, “...before I kill you.”

Goosebumps covered Xu Jiaqi’s entire body.

Chapter 362: Ellie’s Pinnacle

“Ho, hoho...”

Xu Jiaqi took a step back instinctively. Even Arcas, with his huge and muscular build, was shivering from the suffocating murderous intent that Ellie was giving off.

‘This... this is... ridiculous...’

This was just a game. Compared to other players, the members of Black Dragon Order had a much lighter conception about the game *Athenae*. Whether it was the Empress, or the other people inside the game, they only thought of them as artificial intelligence at best. However, the murderous intent that Ellie, an NPC, was giving off right now was enough to scare them, who were players, until they were shivering.

Ellie's bright and alluring eyes were currently sharp, her expression similar to that of a snake staring at its prey, and was very terrifying. Her cold and aloof voice, and even her posture when holding the sword were all overflowing with dignity and grace. Just by standing there, it was enough to show them how unapproachable she was. On top of that, Ellie was already seething with anger. The problem was that they could not find a gap in her stance, despite her overflowing rage.

Then, the notifications rang for the members of the Black Dragon Order.

[Sword Emperor Ellie's murderous intent has restricted your airways.]

[All of your stats have decreased by 15%.]

[Your physical and magical defenses have decreased by 15%.]

[Your chances of successfully landing an attack has decreased by 40%.]

[Your skill cooldown has increased by 20%.]

[Your skill damage has decreased by 20%.]

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

The Black Dragon Order looked at the notifications incredulously. They were all people that had awakened and learned the power of the eight greatest attack skills in all of Korea and China, the Pinnacle. With their Pinnacle awakening, they gained an incredible amount of resistance against abnormal states. However, right now, Sword Emperor Ellie had caused them to suffer many abnormal states, just by standing in front of them.

The situation was unexpected, but Xu Jiaqi knew that she could not back down here and show fear. All of the Chinese players had to be watching the broadcast right now. And even though they only signed a contract with BJ Luo, she was sure that the broadcasting stations would have already contacted Luo the moment they began their operation.

This was what the Black Dragon Order was aiming for. Ellie's hunt would definitely generate a huge viewership rating and would help them rake in huge revenues from advertisements. If they were successful, the Black Dragon Order's value would rise astronomically.

There was one important thing for them to do in this situation, and that was to overwhelm Ellie. Ellie's hunt was the trigger and indication that Black Dragon Order was now coming into the light and raising their public awareness. They could never show the collapse of the Black Dragon Order.

So, Xu Jiaqi tried to maintain her composure and said, "Ellie. I heard that you know the location of another Pinnacle."

Ellie did not answer her and only looked at the shivering citizens of the territory. The citizens of the territory were shivering from fright, but some of them still tried to smile to appease Ellie the moment she appeared. Some of them looked at Ellie, and despite their fears, cried loudly at her.

"Your Majesty!"

"Why?! Why did you come to such a dangerous place!!!"

“Your Majesty! *Sob, sob, sob!* Forgive us, we were too foolish!”

Ellie’s father, the late Emperor, had been a tyrant. He regarded the lives of his citizens as ants, and did nothing to help revive the Empire. He even went so far as to sell the people away. Because of that, more people became hungry, and the voices of resentment against his tyranny had grown louder.

Naturally, everyone became worried when Ellie, a woman, climbed to the throne and became Empress. However, Ellie was completely different from the late Emperor. Although she had the same personality as her father, her thoughts and understanding about her people were completely different. She took down and replaced the rotten, corrupt nobles, returned the food that they had taken away from the people, and implemented a new policy wherein those that worked hard would be rewarded greatly. Her care for her people was genuine and true.

Some might call Ellie an iron lady, a person that would never bleed or shed tears when stabbed, but she was warm to the people that she cared about, and tough against those that threatened her and her people.

The hearts of the villagers soared and warmed when their great ruler, their Empress Ellie, came running to save their own, measly lives. And just like that, Ellie once again won the hearts of the people of the Eivelis Empire. This move would definitely increase the number of people that would want to work harder for Ellie and live a better life. This was the driving force behind Eivelis Empire’s outstanding growth, surpassing itself when ruled by the tyrant many times over, despite their different policies.

Then, Xu Jiaqi asked, “You know that you have to tell us the location, right? Before we kill you? Yeah?”

Xu Jiaqi giggled. It was as if she was trying to dispel her fears by putting on a brave front. But Ellie just snorted at her words and smiled.

“I shoved it in your ass. Why not try and look for it?”

The Black Dragon Order completely failed to get ahead of Ellie. However, that was just for a moment.

“Hohohohohoho! I think I’m going to go crazy because of this Empress!!!”

“Hahahahaha! Interesting. That’s very funny!”

“Keuhahahahaha!”

Xu Jiaqi and Arcas, who were both left dazed for a moment after hearing Ellie’s words, and Anox, another member of the Black Dragon Order, laughed loudly.

“You’re just an unlucky Empress that can only awaken to Half Pinnacle...!”

They have already heard from Da Zhuang that the Sword Emperor Ellie, despite her great power, only awakened the Half Pinnacle state. What did they even have to worry about when Da Zhuang was with them right now? Da Zhuang was someone that had awakened the complete Pinnacle, with the skill reaching Level 6. It was already very difficult for them to take down Da Zhuang even if they all cooperated and attacked him, so how dare Ellie try to hold them down and be arrogant?

Meanwhile, the people watching Luo's broadcast were all in awe of Ellie's actions to save her people.

[Wow. The Empress personally went out to save her people...]

[I wonder how it feels to live under the rule of such an Empress?]

[I wish the president of China was like that...]

However, their awe was only there for a moment. Then, thoughts of how stupid her move was began to emerge.

[Still, Ellie is very foolish.]

[Black Dragon Order has yet to show their full strength. However, we can expect them to overwhelm Ellie. And once the Emperor of the Empire dies, the whole Empire will collapse, tsk...]

[It won't be that easy to deal with them...]

Then, Xu Jiaqi's hand moved. She asked, "Can you even stop us?"

Xu Jiaqi's class was a Master Reflector, which meant that she could reflect her enemy's attacks. Aside from that, there were also countless skills associated with the class. Xu Jiaqi had also awakened to the Reflector's Pinnacle. Right now, she could either reflect, or absorb and store the enemy's attacks sent at her. As a restriction, there will be a 20% damage reduction effect, or skill reduction effect. In a way, the class could be considered to be very weak in terms of 1-on-1 PVP.

However, once it reached the Pinnacle, it became completely different. The Master Reflector could reduce the enemy's attack damage by 80%, and even the stats given to her were so high, that it was comparable to a knight's stats. The change was so great that using the reflection skill on an enemy's attack could return it with even higher damage.

Simply put, if the enemy dealt 100 damage, Xu Jiaqi could return and reflect that attack with 140 damage. The power of the skill had become ridiculous.

On the other hand, the close combat fighter Arcas was someone that had awakened the '*Pinnacle of Consecutive Attacks*', a skill with a ridiculous power in which additional damage would be dealt whenever he landed consecutive attacks.

If he succeeded in landing six consecutive attacks, there would be around 1500% in additional damage. Furthermore, the additional damage was not limited to just that. In other words, if he landed another set of six attacks, or even more, the total damage could easily exceed 4500%.

And as if that was not enough, Arcas also had an ace up his sleeve, his strongest attack—a single attack skill.

Xu Jiaqi and Arcas looked at each other silently.

"Haaaa!"

Dash—

Ellie used Step to narrow the distance between the two of them, and her.

Cass, the Phoenix Knight Order Commander, also came with her on this journey. Cass was next to Ellie in terms of swordsmanship. He was even considered to be the second most powerful

swordsman in the entire Eivelis Empire, widely recognised as the best knight after winning over the knights of the Knight Tower.

Cass was also flanked by Eivelis Empire's knight order and mages.

Crack—

Arcas' arms began to swell in a strange manner after he concentrated his power on it. His Pinnacle skill might only be a single skill, but it had several chapters in it. Chapters 1 and 2 were both consecutive attack skills, while Chapter 3 was a single attack skill. The third and final chapter of his skill would give him an additional 1200% damage, even if he did not successfully land the attack.

Shwaaaaaaa—

A strong force shot out of Arcas' strangely swollen arms. However, the direction of the force looked very strange. It was not headed at his enemies, but towards Xu Jiaqi instead. Currently, none of their Pinnacle skills were exposed yet. That was why Ellie could not understand their moves.

Then, at that moment, Arcas' skill, 'Explosive Dragon Fist', that was headed towards Xu Jiaqi, collided with a translucent mirror that suddenly appeared in front of her.

Shwaaaaaaa—

The powerful skill that almost turned the ground to dust was sucked inside the mirror. Then, Xu Jiaqi turned her body and dragged the huge mirror that had absorbed the Explosive Dragon Fist.

Puhaaaaaaaaa—

[Reflected Explosive Dragon Fist]

[After processing, the Explosive Dragon Fist will be split into dozens of attacks and sent to the enemy. The power of the Explosive Dragon Fist will be 700% more powerful.]

Dozens of smaller Explosive Dragon Fists flew out towards Cass and Ellie.

Claaaaang—

Baaaaaaaang!

Cass slashed one of the incoming Explosive Dragon Fists with his sword. The enormous force hidden behind the attack made his body tremble from the impact.

Arcas, who unleashed his strongest single attack skill, and Xu Jiaqi, who reflected the attack, were showing chemistry and cooperation.

Shwaaaaaaa—

Several sword lights flew out from Cass' sword which extinguished the flying Explosive Dragon Fists. Then, the knights stationed behind him took out their swords and rushed forward. However, their power combined was not enough to offset all of the incoming Explosive Dragon Fists.

Meanwhile, Ellie kept running, just like Arcas thought she would. Arcas' Pinnacle's Explosive Dragon Fist was a skill that could be casted three times in a row. The first attack was supposed to be bait. Once she approached, Arcas would immediately strike her chest with another Explosive Dragon Fist. Then, Ellie appeared right in front of Arcas.

“Keuaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaack!”

The still-running Cass, together with the other knights, were not able to withstand the onslaught of the Explosive Dragon Fists, and were pushed back by its overwhelming power. During that moment, Ellie had already reached Arcas.

“Explosive Dragon Fist!” Arcas shouted as the powerful force hidden in his arms stretched out towards Ellie.

But at that moment...

Tap!

...Ellie used her skill Step and continued to advance on air without stopping. She was literally walking on air. This showed the difference between her and Minhyuk's 'Step'. Ellie continued to take one, two, three steps in the sky above them.

Dash, dash, dash!

Ellie climbed up higher in the sky the more steps she took. She had already realized that this fight could not be dragged longer. Ellie did not want to kill Minhyuk during their fight, so she did not deal a heavy blow to him. That was the reason why no one had ever seen her tie-breaker move as of yet. After climbing high up in the sky, Ellie headed straight towards the ground with her sword, while using her buff skill 'Ellie's Swordsmanship'. Then, a red aurora shot out of her body.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Finally, she swung her sword strongly.

“Sword of Annihilation.”

Shing, shing, shing, shing, shing, shing, shing—

Hundreds of four meter long sword blades were created in an instant. The sword blades rained down on Xu Jiaqi, Arcas, and the rest of the members of the Black Dragon Order, like a disaster falling down upon mankind. Xu Jiaqi hurriedly triggered her Master Reflector skills.

[Pinnacle Attack Reflection]

[Absorbs and reflects the enemy's attacks.]

This was a skill that never failed her, always allowing her to absorb and reflect any attack. A confident smile hung on Xu Jiaqi's lips.

‘Ellie will be done for once this skill gets reflected...!’

Things would become easier for them. Then, a gigantic mirror rose in the sky and met with the falling sword blades.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The sword blades got sucked in the mirror. No, that was what Xu Jiaqi thought. To her shock...

Crack, crack, crack—!

[The Attack Reflection has failed.]

[The skill cannot be reflected.]

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Spurt—!

A sword blade pierced through Xu Jiaqi's chest. The hundreds of sword blades also fell down and stabbed Arcas, as well as the rest of the members of Black Dragon Order present. They all looked like hedgehogs after being stabbed by the hundreds of glittering sword blades.

On the other hand, BJ Luo and the countless viewers across the screen were all in awe at the powerful skill that had never been seen before.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk was currently learning a Pinnacle skill from Conir. Minhyuk had also told Conir about the young Conir that he knew. The Trial Conir only told him that he would tell him what happened once he awakened the Pinnacle.

Minhyuk went out of the game for a moment to take a break, and was able to see a battle video on his mobile phone.

“Noo... noona...?” Minhyuk asked, his entire body trembling.

There was one person that he loved and cherished the most in *Athenae*, and that was none other than Sword Emperor Ellie. And right now, someone was threatening his precious person.

Minhyuk clenched his fists tightly.

Chapter 363: Ellie's Pinnacle

A smile of relief bloomed on Ruth's face, after seeing the members of the Black Dragon Order get pierced by the hundreds of sword blades that Ellie released.

As someone who had watched over Ellie since her childhood and as her aide, Ruth had opposed her decision and tried to stop her.

‘You can't go, Your Majesty!’

However, Ellie was stubborn. She said, *‘Don't try to stop me, Ruth. I have to go.’*

This happened a few hours ago. Up until this moment, Ruth believed that Ellie's plan was flimsy and filled with loopholes. But after pondering the steps that she took so far, he could see how much of a genius the woman she had become.

‘She doesn't fight a battle that she will lose...!’

With this move, Ellie could launch an attack towards her enemies, and also win the favor of the people, right?

“Your Majesty!” Ruth shouted, running to check if she sustained any injuries.

But then, Ellie said, “Sir Cass.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“I will buy you some time. Take the people to safety and take the knights and mages with you.”

“...!”

“Your... Your Majesty...?!”

Ruth and Sir Cass both looked at her in horror. Especially Ruth. He could not even understand why she said that. Right now, three of their enemies looked to be incapacitated and could not engage in combat anymore. Their blood was already flowing down their bodies from the sword blades stabbed on their bodies. Ruth was sure that they only needed to twist their neck to finish the fight.

Ellie was a very smart and intelligent commander and warrior. She would never shy away from her enemies if she could fight them head-on. She was the Sword Emperor Ellie, and the greatest Empress of Eivelis Empire. However, this very same woman was telling them to run away.

Ellie just stared at Ruth and Cass before saying, “This is an order.”

“I have received your order.”

Then, Ruth and Ellie’s eyes met.

“Aide Ruth.”

“Yes... Your, Your Majesty!”

“Just in case, can you give the Deep Sea Beef to Minhyuk for me?”

“...!”

Ruth felt his heart break after hearing her words. However, there was nothing he could do. This was an Imperial Order. He was barely able to open his lips and bow his head.

“I...I have received your order...” His voice a deathly whisper.

Cass quickly took the knights and the mages and evacuated the cowering citizens behind the enemies. Ellie just continued to look at the Black Dragon Order coldly. The hiltless sword blades that she had sent out were slowly scattering in the air.

‘Da Zhuang has not made his move yet. And there’s also that man.’

There was only one among the two other remaining members of the Black Dragon Order that had not yet made his move. That man was none other than Anox. Then, at that moment...

Swish—

Swiiiiiiiish—

...the three members of Black Dragon Order that had been stabbed to death by the sword blades melted and turned into liquid. The liquid then turned viscous, wriggling like jelly as they took form once again.

“Phew. I didn’t know she had that ability...”

“It’s beyond our expectation.”

“I was so surprised when I failed to reflect the skill. My Pinnacle Reflection skill has never failed like that before.”

Xu Jiaqi’s smile was greasy.

“...!”

For a moment, Ellie could not understand what had just happened. None of them showed any signs of any damage from her Sword of Annihilation. There was also the fact that their bodies had melted and reformed.

‘A resurrection ability?’

Ellie’s brows furrowed in thought. No, to her, it did not look like it was a resurrection ability. This was mainly because there was no harm inflicted on their regenerated bodies. Besides, she had never heard of an ability that could resurrect three people at the same time.

‘What the hell is it?’

She looked at them in both confusion and disbelief, especially at the man wearing a black mask, Anox. He was someone worthy to take note of, since none of his abilities has been revealed yet. However, Ellie was certain that the reason why the Black Dragon Order could still stand unscathed was because of that man named Anox.

Step, step, step—

Da Zhuang, who just stood still to watch the show, finally stepped forward.

“This fight won’t take long, Ellie. I acknowledge your pride and dignity for coming all the way here.”

Da Zhuang was someone that had awakened to full Pinnacle, and had helped Xu Jiaqi, as well as the rest of the members of Black Dragon Order, to awaken to Pinnacle. He was someone that only existed in the past. However, thanks to the Black Dragon Order, he was able to awaken once again.

Da Zhuang was currently in a situation where his strength was not completely restored. However, he could recover the power that he had lost, once he learnt of the location of another ‘*Pinnacle*’ and learnt the skill.

Ellie was, in fact, very nervous. Although Da Zhuang seemed to have lost his former strength, he was still a legendary figure of the past, a legend among all of the assassins.

Finally, Da Zhuang made his move.

Shwaaaaa—

The moment Da Zhuang flew out, a splash rang loudly. His body disappeared as if it was sucked by water. Then, the next moment, he appeared right in front of Ellie.

Claaaaaang—

Da Zhuang instantly appeared on Ellie’s right side and launched another attack just as his flying dagger was blocked.

Claaaaang—

‘From what I heard, Da Zhuang can switch his body with nature at will. His speed is also very unimaginable.’

Ellie recalled Da Zhuang’s legends in the past.

Flash—

Da Zhuang moved again after his dagger was blocked. Ellie recalled that there were leaves falling gently behind her. Da Zhuang instantly changed his position with the falling leaves and struck Ellie from above.

“Step.”

The moment Ellie widened the distance between her and Da Zhuang...

Shwaaaaaaa—

...Arcas moved and grabbed her collar as he punched straight at Ellie’s full plate armor.

Baaaaaaang—

When Ellie staggered back, Da Zhuang had already switched his position with the soil on the ground and stabbed his dagger towards her neck. The worst part was the additional 800% attack power added to his dagger from the power of his attack skill.

Grab—

However, even while Ellie was retreating, she did not forget to grab Da Zhuang’s wrist.

“...!”

Da Zhuang was very surprised.

‘She really is a true genius of her generation.’

Ellie was worthy of the title of genius, being able to fight against those that had awakened the Pinnacle. Meanwhile, Arcas was able to successfully land his second attack.

Baaang!

He struck Ellie head on and was able to push her back. The damage that he inflicted was also stacked. The skill ‘Pinnacle of Consecutive Attacks’ had finally shown its true worth.

[Pinnacle of Consecutive Attacks]

[You have dealt an additional 700% damage after the second successful attack.]

“Ugh!” Ellie groaned as she turned her head. The moment her feet landed on the ground after being sent flying back, she immediately cast Blooming Sword.

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

Hundreds of flowers made of sword blades bloomed on the ground.

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

The flowers of sword blades exploded, stopping Anox, Xu Jiaqi and Da Zhuang in their tracks.

“Urk!”

Da Zhuang, who was closely chasing after Ellie, was caught in the explosion, his body tearing apart.

‘What an amazing person...’

Da Zhuang had no choice but to admire Ellie’s prowess. In the meantime, Arcas had already sent out his fourth successful attack.

[Pinnacle of Consecutive Attacks]

[You have dealt an additional 1000% damage after the fourth successful attack.]

“Ughhhh!”

Ellie’s vision grew dark for a moment from the powerful damage. Arcas took the opportunity to raise her body up in the sky.

Baaaaaaaang—

“Urk!”

Shining red blood spurted out of Ellie’s mouth. She was so dizzy that she could not even see what was in front of her. Then, Arcas clasped his hands together and sent his final blow.

Baaaaaaaang—

The attack connected with Ellie’s body the moment she fell down on the ground. The impact of the attack shattered the ground and buried her body in it. It was as if a bomb had fallen on that place. From the looks of it, Ellie seemed to be buried around 80 centimeters deep in the ground. Her body twitched slightly, and she could not move.

“Ellie, spit out the location of the Pinnacle. Perhaps, we can spare your life if you do so.”

Da Zhuang acknowledged her pride. This was his final act of mercy towards her. And as an answer to his question, Ellie slowly moved her hand. Da Zhuang, Xu Jiaqi, Arcas, and Anox looked at each other in excitement.

Then, Ellie, despite her trembling hand, raised her middle finger and said, “Bullshit.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

BJ Luo and the viewers that watched that scene all expressed their awe and admiration.

[Crazy. In that situation...]

[Wow. From today onwards, I'm Ellie's fan... That's really freaking cool...]

[Isn't she showing us that she won't let her enemies win, even if she's not stronger than them?]

[But even if I become Ellie's fan today, she's still going to die...]

This was Ellie's great pride and dignity! The odds would not be so tilted had they fought against her one on one.

"Then, we'll get it by force," Da Zhuang said as he slowly approached Ellie.

Then, at that moment...

"Your... Your Majesty!!!"

...a man came running towards Ellie. He was just an old man that looked like he did not have the power to lift a sword. However, he still ran towards Ellie while crying out her name. This man was none other than Ruth. He had picked up a sword that someone had left behind and held it with both of his hands. He swung the sword wildly towards their enemies.

"Keep your hands off of Her Majesty!!! Keep your hands off of Her Majesty!!!"

He looked completely ridiculous. Ruth had completely defied the Imperial Order. However, he thought that it was alright even if he died. But, just when he was about to strike at them to protect Ellie...

Fwoosh—

Xu Jiaqi slashed Ruth's side with her blade. Ruth screamed and fell down from the pain but he still jumped up and came at them.

"Hohohoho! This old man is really funny!"

This time, Xu Jiaqi slashed Ruth's shoulders.

"Keuaaaaaack!"

Then, she kicked the screaming Ruth, who crawled towards Ellie.

"Your... Your Majesty...!"

"Hohohohohoho!"

Xu Jiaqi and the members of the Black Dragon Order laughed at him.

"Stop. Let him die a painless death. Don't mock his pride and dignity," Da Zhuang said as he slowly bowed his head towards Ruth and Ellie. He sincerely admired their pride.

'I... I have to break... to break the gem in Her, Her Majesty's necklace...'

Ruth thought about Ellie's power being restrained by the gem inlaid in Ellie's necklace. He was sure that they would not be in this situation right now, had that gem been completely broken.

Meanwhile, Xu Jiaqi was slowly approaching Ruth.

“Ruth... I can’t... believe... that... you disobeyed... my Imperial Order...”

“Your... Your Majesty...”

Ruth gathered all of his strength to crawl to Ellie after hearing her voice. That was when he saw Ellie grab the necklace hanging on her neck.

“...?!”

Ruth was very shocked. He thought, ‘*Did, did Her Majesty know all along?!*’

Then...

“Protect Ellie!!!”

“Let’s goooooo!”

“Waaaaaaaaah!!!”

The hearts of the Korean players beat wildly as they watched Ellie fight proudly. A huge number of people had already gathered near the village, over 2,000 players, and they all quickly advanced towards the Black Dragon Order.

Slash—!

“Keheok!”

“Keuaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaargh!”

“Don’t back down!”

“Urk!”

These countless players all thought about themselves as a meat shield.

“It seems like Asgan Continent is a very admirable place,” Da Zhuang assessed while looking at the rushing players, before he nodded.

“We should treat them with great courtesy.”

Both the daggers in Da Zhuang’s hands shone brightly, showing off their sharpness. He was about to use his ‘*Pinnacle*’. Da Zhuang was an assassin that utilized the power of nature. And right now, the mana that surrounded nature was being sucked into him.

Da Zhuang was a great legend of the past. He had used his own power to stop and kill 3,000 incoming enemies at once. Although his power had been weakened, his experience would never be lost.

The mana in nature gathered around him and formed the shape of a bloody red dagger. Then, tens of thousands of bloody daggers appeared in the air the moment Da Zhuang extended his arm. These tens of thousands of daggers all gathered together to form one gigantic, bloody dagger. The dagger, which was the size of a jet, looked extremely domineering. Anyone would be split in half the moment they touched the tip of that sharp dagger.

“Stop them!!!”

“Waaaaaaaaah!!!”

However, even though they knew of the strength behind that attack, the Korean players still continued to rush forward. But just when the skill was about to devour the players...

Tap—

Da Zhuang jerked his head back. This was because the place where Ellie was buried was empty. She was nowhere to be found. When he turned back to look back at the players, Da Zhuang saw Ellie standing in front of the man that was at the forefront of the pack.

Ellie's hair fluttered in the wind. But, instead of the usual bright red, it had now turned into silver. Even her stance as she held her sword looked infinitely soft and light. Ellie slowly clasped the hilt of her sword and lightly swung it down towards the incoming '*Pinnacle*' skill.

That was right. Ellie only lightly slashed her sword down. At that moment...

Craaaaaaaack—

Da Zhuang's Pinnacle continued to move forward. However, it was already split in two, and both parts only passed by the thousands of players before colliding against the buildings behind them.

Baaaaaaaang—

The buildings behind them collapsed and created a strong gust of wind. The now silver-haired Ellie looked at Da Zhuang and spat coldly, “I told you to get your hands off of my people, you fucking bastards.”

Chapter 364: Ellie's Pinnacle

Da Zhuang took a step back in surprise from the sudden, oppressing aura that Ellie was emitting.

“Pin... Pinnacle?”

The sword that slashed his skill was not Half-Pinnacle. It was, without a mistake, a complete and perfect Pinnacle.

Aerod, the God of Abilities and Disasters, had bestowed the earth with eight of the strongest, and most powerful forces. Among them, there was a power that was so strong that it was said that no human could ever achieve its Pinnacle. But right now, Ellie was using that very skill.

Then, Ellie suddenly disappeared from Da Zhuang's sight. He hastily tried to activate his defensive skills, but Ellie was already standing in front of him before he could even do so.

“Da Zhuang. Make sure to feel the difference between us.”

Ellie's cold voice pierced through Da Zhuang's ears.

“Lamenting Sword.”

Wails and cries of lament rang loudly the moment those words ended.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaa—

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The sounds that flowed through Da Zhuang's ears were clearly that of a sword swinging, but he could feel the despair and sorrow from within those sounds. And the moment that feeling engulfed him...

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh!

...hundreds of invisible sword blades pierced through Da Zhuang's body.

"Keuaaaaaaaaaack!" Da Zhuang screamed loudly as he slowly collapsed to the ground.

Ellie turned her head towards Xu Jiaqi, Arcas, and Anox. Then, the notifications rang in their heads.

[You are subjected to the Absolute Supreme NPC's Killing Intent.]

[All of your skills and abilities have been reduced by 40%.]

[The cooldown for all of your skills and abilities has increased by 40%.]

[Your resistance to abnormal status has decreased and reached below 50%.]

'Did... did you just say Supreme NPC...?'

Xu Jiaqi, Arcas, and Anox all gulped dryly at the title that they had never encountered before.

Special Players Management Team.

Lee Minhwa, with various snacks on hand, was shocked after what she saw during her usual monitoring duties.

Beep, beep, beep, beep—

This was because the monitor was flashing an ominous red color.

"Team, Team Leader!"

Team Leader Park rushed to her table when he heard her call. He asked, "What is it again this time?"

The moment Team Leader Park reached her table, he saw the words blinking on the monitor screen that was flashing with a red warning.

[Empress Ellie, one of the Absolute Supreme NPCs of the Continent, has awakened.]

Athenae's executives and management departments immediately convened a meeting the moment the warning appeared. President Kang Taehoon sat solemnly in the center of the conference room, with both of his hands clasped together under his chin.

"The Absolute Supreme NPC that should only appear two years later has awakened..."

Each continent had quite a number of Supreme NPCs among them. There were more than 100 Supreme NPCs if they tallied all of the Supreme NPCs present in all of the continents. However, the Absolute Supreme NPCs were an entirely different classification for NPCs, and they were only scheduled to awaken two years from now. Compared to the Supreme NPCs, the Absolute Supreme NPCs numbered only seven at most.

In fact, they were scheduled to open this classification during a step-by-step process and release of episodes. It was supposed to happen only after the servers had integrated, and Ellie would then start dreaming of integrating the continents. Once Ellie realized that her powers were limited after she had achieved the continent integration, she would try to awaken herself to become the Absolute Supreme NPC. Once she achieved that, she would then be known as '*Continental Empress Ellie*'.

In the first place, Ellie was an NPC with great influence, not only in Korea, but across the entire continent. And the power that she would come to possess later had appeared faster than they expected. Would there be a problem with the balance? No. That was not the problem at all.

"There's a high chance that Absolute Supreme NPC Ellie may die..."

The Absolute Supreme NPCs were pivotal existences for the direction of the future updates. But Ellie had already opened up and released her power as an Absolute Supreme NPC. This meant that the strength that she had sealed for a long time had awakened. In the first place, she was the woman that was supposed to reach and awaken the highest and strongest Pinnacle.

The problem was that her current body would not be able to handle that much power. There was even a high chance that the power would turn on her and gradually devour her, until she died.

"Anyone have any suggestions or ideas for a way to deal with this?"

"..."

"..."

"..."

All of them went silent. None of them could think of a definite method. They were sure that she would be devoured by that power in the end.

Then, Team Leader Park expressed his opinion, "Currently, there's only one person that will try to change the situation at hand."

All of them turned to look at Team Leader Park.

The truth was that the *Athenae* operators and administrators did not usually engage in the game, and would only intervene if there was a chance of a huge imbalance happening. It was the case right now. Even though they wanted to save Ellie, they still would not get involved. That was why Team Leader Park thought of only one person.

"This person cares and loves Ellie more than anybody else. He's none other than Player Minhyuk. I'm sure that he will do anything to save her."

All of the people present frowned, with the exception of President Kang Taehoon. He was the only one that looked at Team Leader Park in interest.

"Team Leader Park, he might be the Food God, but do you really think that player will be able to come up with a solution to this situation?"

"I can't say with certainty if he will be able to do it or not. But compared to us, who are helpless and can't do anything, Player Minhyuk will surely do something, anything, just to save her."

“That’s right. Player Minhyuk loves Ellie very much. Besides, Ellie also holds him dearly in her heart.”

The two were so close that they even called each other siblings. In fact, the two of them had a strong bond that was far beyond a simple sibling relationship.

President Kang Taehoon smiled at the thought. Seeing him smile, the rest of the people turned to him. Then, he said, “If Player Minhyuk can solve this problem that we don’t have any solution for, he will become Ellie’s benefactor, on top of being her younger brother. The very same Ellie that will become the Continental Empress.”

Xu Jiaqi’s body trembled wildly. It only took one move to make Da Zhuang collapse. Even Da Zhuang’s most powerful Pinnacle skill was split in half by Ellie’s light sword strike.

‘What... what the hell is an Absolute Supreme NPC...?!’ Xu Jiaqi thought, as Ellie appeared in front of her.

Claaaaang!

Xu Jiaqi quickly used her Pinnacle Reflection to counter Ellie’s swinging sword. However, even though the hit was a simple and direct one, a shocking notification rang in Xu Jiaqi’s ears.

[You cannot reflect the attacks of an Absolute Supreme NPC.]

Clatter!

The mirror was helpless under the assault of the attack. It easily broke in half, as the sword continued on to cut Xu Jiaqi’s body.

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

Xu Jiaqi was horrified at the reality that was in front of her. Just that one hit was enough to reduce her HP by 70%. The scariest part was the fact that Ellie only drew her sword gently, but it had already pierced deep through her chest.

Ellie then turned to look at the rushing Arcas, pulled her sword out from Xu Jiaqi’s chest, before placing it back in the scabbard on her waist and pulling it out again.

“Splitting Moonlight.”

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Ellie was able to utilize all of the power and skills that she could use the moment she awakened to Pinnacle. Those included the chapters of the skills related to the Pinnacle. Among all of Quick Draw skills, Splitting Moonlight was the best. The skill could ignore 80% of the enemy’s physical defense, and could deal 2,000% damage once she cut them.

“Keheooooook!”

Arcas’s defense was very high. There were not many players who could even deal a scratch on Arcas’ body. However, Ellie’s sword was able to cut Arcas’ body. And that was not all, hundreds of sword lights with unbelievable force and slashing power also flew out of her sword towards Anox.

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

Anox's body disappeared under the onslaught of the hundreds of sword lights. Then, just like before, the others also disappeared from the ground and turned into jelly.

"I finally found how you can come back to life," Ellie said, sneering.

Xu Jiaqi, Da Zhuang, Arcas and Anox were all shocked and astonished.

'She... she already saw through it?'

They knew that they were finished the moment she discovered their secrets. Even Da Zhuang shook in fear when he saw the insurmountable wall that separated him from her. When Ellie took a step forward, Da Zhuang panicked and fell on his buttocks.

Thud—

"This... this can't be happening..."

The Legendary NPC, Da Zhuang, was so powerful that he could make anyone flinch from fear. However, just one step from the dignified and absolute being, Ellie, and he was already down on the ground.

At that crucial moment, blood suddenly spurted out of Ellie's mouth.

"Urk...?"

Ellie felt the blood flow from her mouth.

'It seems like my body can't stand this much force...?'

Perhaps, this was the reason why her father had sealed this power with a sealing stone before. But, she knew could not fall down here. She tried to use her remaining strength to swing her sword again, as her body fell down.

Collapse—

"Ha... hahahahaha!"

"Ho... hohohoho. Won, we won...!"

Xu Jiaqi, Da Zhuang and the Black Dragon Order felt lucky that they survived.

"Hurry up and kill her!" Xu Jiaqi said.

Everyone agreed with her. Da Zhuang also thought of the same thing. When he saw how powerful Ellie was, he decided that it was better to kill her off than chase other 'Pinnacle' skills.

Just when they were approaching here with all of their attacking skills...

Vwoooooong—

A man covered with fluttering black currents of energy appeared in front of Ellie. The man that appeared definitely used Blink. Xu Jiaqi and the rest of the Black Dragon Order were very familiar with this man.

"Black... Black Mage Ali?"

Black Mage Ali glared coldly at the members of the Black Dragon Order. He said, “My friend will come to collect this debt soon.”

When the last word fell from his mouth, bright lights covered Ellie and the rest of the citizens of Eivelis Empire, including the knights, the mages, and the players.

“Sh... shit...!”

He used a Mass Teleport that covered more than 1,500 players, and even included Ellie and the other NPCs! This act alone showed the world that Ali truly was the best mage in the world.

At the same time, the Black Dragon Order failed to obtain anything. They failed to kill Ellie, and harvest the proof of their overwhelming force. Instead of receiving praises, they even garnered curses after they tried to kill the fainted Ellie that they had pushed to this point. Just like that, the chatroom in BJ Luo’s broadcast was filled with curses.

[Ellie won.]

[No matter how much you look at it, Ellie is the one that won... The Black Dragon Order just tried to kill a person that already collapsed. Tsk. Tsk.]

[Even though we’re players from the same country, I feel so embarrassed with what they did.]

[The Black Dragon Order... No, they should be called the Moron Order, right? How can they fail to kill her? She already collapsed in front of them.]

[They’re a group of f*cking bastards. Hehehehehehehehehe. They said that they were strong, but in the end they couldn’t kill her. Sigh.]

The Black Dragon Order received constant criticisms from the viewers. And China would most likely continue to write articles about this. In the end, what the Black Dragon Order achieved was no different from a defeat against Ellie. They did not gain anything, and would only suffer blames, curses, and criticisms.

Meanwhile, the members of the Black Dragon Order were in doubt.

‘His friend will come to collect this debt?’

‘Who the hell is his friend?’

The same doubt ran through everyone’s heads: *‘Who is his friend?’*

Minhyuk received a whisper.

Minhyuk wanted so desperately to run to where Ellie was when she was forced into a corner in that situation. Unfortunately, the distance between them was not something that he could traverse in an instant.

However, Minhyuk was aware of what he needed to do. He needed to climb further and awaken the Pinnacle. But before he did so, he asked the members of the Let's Eat Sect for help. Among the members, Ali was the only one that was closest to the village.

Then, Conir suddenly said, "You have only learned the first chapter."

There were still three chapters left for Minhyuk to learn. That was when another whisper from Ali came.

Minhyuk was currently taking a break after learning the first chapter. This was because the Pinnacle was very hard and strenuous to learn. Not long after, Ali sent the words that Ellie wanted to tell Minhyuk.

"..."

Minhyuk went silent.

Even though Ellie only gained consciousness for a moment, she still knew that Minhyuk would be worried about her, so she said those words.

Minhyuk quickly rose to his feet and said, "Let's continue with the next chapter."

His goals had been set. He would hunt the Black Dragon Order, and save Ellie from the force that was eating away at her body.

Chapter 365: Pinnacle

Sword Saint Conir was looking at Minhyuk in interest. The method to learn Conir's Pinnacle was very simple. All Minhyuk needed to do was to swing his sword repeatedly in compliance with the chapter. That was on top of adjusting the posture and form to Minhyuk's own swordsmanship.

However, even though the method was simple, obtaining the Pinnacle was not an easy feat. After all, Minhyuk had to swing his sword repeatedly for 30,000 times.

The number of times that Minhyuk had to swing his sword should be at least 30,000 times. This was a very difficult feat to achieve. If someone had a weaker mentality, they would simply be unable to hold on for long. Most people would grow tired of simply swinging their sword, even before they could achieve 10,000 swings.

However, Minhyuk went without sleep for several days to continue swinging his sword when he was learning the first chapter. His driving force was his goal, and fury.

'What are you furious about?'

The reason remained a mystery to Conir. However, he knew that Minhyuk's current feelings were the reason why he could repeatedly swing his sword 30,000 times, a task that was arduous to complete.

Conir's method of training each chapter was simple, they needed to swing the sword with all their strength, with the most accurate form. An hour has 3,600 seconds, and one swing with the accurate form needed at least four seconds to execute. This was mainly because it consumes stamina, or STM. Someone that could swing 1,800 times in two hours would then need to take a break to replenish their strength. No matter how much someone wanted to continue, they would already then feel the limits of their physical and mental strength.

However, Minhyuk was able to learn the first chapter, without any rest.

‘He’s truly an exceptional man.’

While Minhyuk was learning the Pinnacle, he also made sure to talk with Conir. He had told Conir that the young boy Conir was working under him as a ‘vassal’.

‘He might be young, but he’s still me. He would never choose to serve someone that easily.’

In fact, it was very surprising that the young Conir willingly served someone. But, after interacting with Minhyuk, Conir understood why his young version chose to do so.

Meanwhile, the first chapter that Minhyuk had just learned was a sword skill that combined Sword of Fury and Scattering Sword.

[A new chapter will be added to Ellie’s Swordsmanship.]

[Its power has reached Half Pinnacle.]

[You have acquired +5 to all five of your basic stats for learning a Pinnacle Chapter.]

[You have learned the Sword of Frenzy.]

[You will have additional 400% damage to your attack upon a successful strike to your enemy’s vital point. The six consecutive attacks that would follow the attack will have additional 100% damage. Upon a successful vital point attack, enemies within a five meter radius will receive six consecutive attacks with additional 100% damage.]

The Sword of Frenzy was literally the combination of Sword of Fury and Scattering Sword. Just like in Scattering Sword, where Minhyuk could deal consecutive sword strikes with additional 140% damage, he would be able to unleash six more attacks with additional 100% damage upon a successful strike to his enemy’s vital point.

‘That’s crazy...’

If one calculated the total, potential damage, then it would add up to 1000%. Of course, in the case of consecutive attacks, there was the possibility of missing his attacks. However, the effects of the skill were definitely far better than before. Just the fact that he could deal six consecutive attacks, with 100% additional damage to his enemies within a five meter radius, was well over the top already.

‘So, this is the power of Pinnacle...’

Minhyuk could also tell the reason why it was only at Half Pinnacle.

‘A single use of this skill will consume 7,000 mana...?’

Thanks to all the medicines and elixirs that Minhyuk had eaten so far, his mana reserves had reached 26,000, an amount that far surpassed plenty of ordinary class players. This was the reason why he was only restricted by the ‘cooldown’ whenever he used Ellie’s Swordsmanship and various other skills, but never the MP.

With his MP, the amount of times that he could use Sword of Frenzy would be extremely limited. In fact, even its cooldown was twice as much as the existing Sword of Fury and Scattering Sword. He surmised that the same must be true with the other skills.

Fwooooooom—

Minhyuk continued to swing his wooden sword. This time, the skill that he was learning was a combination of Splitting Sword and Blooming Sword. Splitting Sword was a skill that would send out sword lights the moment Minhyuk swung his sword horizontally. On the other hand, Blooming Sword was a sword skill that would trigger flowers of sword blades to bloom on the ground, which would stab his enemies and inflict additional damage with the flowers explosions.

Fwooooooom—

Minhyuk swung his sword horizontally. After finishing that movement, he immediately stabbed his sword strongly on the ground. However, these movements required high mental concentration, and just the slightest deviation would cause notifications to ring out for Minhyuk.

[You have not reached the correct number of swings.]

[Please use the correct posture and power when swinging the sword.]

One could say that this method of learning was too stringent. In order for Minhyuk to learn, he literally needed to swing his sword repeatedly and accurately, to the point that it could already be classified as ‘*torture*’

.

However, Minhyuk did not stop, even after one hour, then two hours, then three hours. Perspiration continued to drip down his body, but he still continued to swing.

Ever since he had contracted his eating addiction and ate a huge amount of food everyday, Minhyuk always had to grit his teeth and exercise more than anybody else to live and survive. To avoid damaging his knees, he chose to swim in the pool continuously and waddle his fat body while lying in bed.

Perhaps, the thing that he was best at was ‘*working hard*’. Someone once said that Minhyuk, who had everything, was the perfect man if only he did not have his ‘*eating addiction*’. However, that might not be the answer at all. Minhyuk had always worked harder than anybody else. Even when he was struggling so hard to exercise and fight against his eating addiction, he would still continue to ponder over mathematical formulas in his head, and would even murmur English words to himself. His athleticness and quick reflexes? This, too, was something that could be considered as a result of Minhyuk’s repeated training and efforts.

In a blink of an eye, five hours had passed.

“You should get some rest now.”

“No, thank you. I’m alright.”

For some reason, Conir felt increasingly worried about Minhyuk and tried to dissuade him. He knew that Minhyuk was a ‘*foreigner*’, a special existence that could come back to life. However, he believed that they would also feel the same pain as them.

Athenae was a very realistic game and doing something repeatedly like this would definitely make Minhyuk feel the same way if he were to do something like this in reality.

In fact, Minhyuk's eyes had already started to go blurry from dizziness, as drops of perspiration dripped down from his chin. Even his breaths had turned haggard. His body was thoroughly soaked, while his mouth was burning from dehydration. He could feel that his body was already sore and was close to sagging from the pressure. Still, he did not stop.

Then, the notifications rang in Minhyuk's head.

[You have acquired 1 DEX.]

[You have acquired 1 Will.]

[You have acquired 1 Will.]

[You have acquired 1 Will.]

[You have acquired 1 DEX.]

[...acquired 1 Will.]

Thanks to Minhyuk's consistent efforts, his 'Will' stat was rising continuously. Even his DEX was increasing rapidly. Although the effects were a bit insignificant, wielding a sword would also have an effect in DEX, especially after he repeatedly swung his sword without using a skill. That was the main reason why his DEX and Will stats kept on increasing. He earned as much as 11 Will stat points in just one day alone.

Then, the skill that assisted Minhyuk and stopped him from succumbing to his exhaustion was triggered.

[You have triggered the Skill: Will.]

[All of your skills and abilities related to DEX will temporarily increase by 25%.]

The skill, Will, would be triggered every hour since the skill only had a one hour duration. In a blink, eight hours had already passed.

The one swing every four seconds that Conir had estimated before included breaks in between. But Minhyuk had completely foregone taking breaks, and completed 10,000 sword swings.

'He's crazy...! Very crazy...!'

Conir was both in shock and horror at the ridiculous mental fortitude that Minhyuk was showing him.

Meanwhile, the notifications continued to ring for Minhyuk.

[You have accumulated more than 50 points in your Will stat.]

[The Skill: Will has leveled up.]

[You have accumulated more than 50 points in your Will stat.]

[The Skill: Will has leveled up.]

Minhyuk had leveled up his skill, Will, twice in a row.

Passive Skill

?Your fatigue and exhausted mind will clear up whenever you exert your utmost effort, passion, determination and indomitable will. All skills and abilities related to DEX will have a 20-30% increase for one hour.

?Increases the Will Acquisition Rate.

The level up requirement for the passive skill ‘Will’ was to accumulate 50 Will stat points. Today, Minhyuk was able to level up his once-stagnant passive skill Will, twice in a row. And with the increase in level, he was able to trigger the skill Will once again.

[You have triggered the Skill: Will.]

[All of your stats, skills, and abilities, including DEX, will temporarily increase by 28%.]

There was a significant difference after the level up in the skill. Compared to the effects of Minhyuk’s Level 1 Will skill, his current skill helped his head become much clearer. Even his exhausted body was energized once again. This was mainly because the Level 1 Will skill mainly focused on DEX, which had nothing to do with temporarily clearing the mind and clearing fatigue.

However, an astonishing change happened after the skill ‘Will’ reached Level 3. It was not only DEX, but all stats, skills, and abilities would increase for an hour.

‘This is amazing...!’

He was lucky enough to have gained an amazing, yet ridiculous, ability. Simply put, once this passive skill was triggered, Minhyuk would be able to increase his skills, abilities, and stats by almost 30%, and could disregard the ‘*no overlapping buff*’ restriction. A 30% increase was equivalent to a 150-level increase, and for someone at Minhyuk’s level, an increase of that degree would result in a monstrous power. That was why this was an amazingly ridiculous ability.

Just like that, Minhyuk continued his repetitive and hard task. Out of the entire 24 hours each day, he only took four hours of break to replenish his strength and stamina. Because of this, even though he had the skill ‘Will’, he often fell into a ‘*faint*’ state. However, as a result, Minhyuk was able to learn and awaken the remaining two chapters within three days.

[Ellie’s Swordsmanship has reached Half Pinnacle.]

[You will receive rewards for applying a Half Pinnacle skill to the entire Swordsmanship.]

[You have acquired +20 to all five of your basic stats.]

[You have gained 500 REP.]

[You have learned the Heaven Tearing Sword.]

[You will be able to send a red sword light with an additional 350% damage and 20% increase in critical hit rate towards your enemies. Upon a successful attack on a vital point, an explosion with an additional 600% damage will engulf your enemy.]

The Heaven Tearing Sword was the combination of Splitting Sword and Blooming Sword.

[You have learned the Sword of Tempest.]

[Hundreds of sword blades with 250% additional attack will be created around your body that will indiscriminately slaughter your enemies within six seconds. During the duration of the skill, your movement speed will increase by 200%.]

The Sword of Tempest was the sword skill created after combining ‘*Rampant Sword*’ and ‘*Like the Wind*’. It was most suitable as a defensive skill. Although using all three of these skills would consume 21,000 of his MP, Minhyuk found it justifiable, with how unbelievably powerful the skills were.

Then, another notification rang in Minhyuk’s head.

The One Acknowledged by the Sword Saint. Minhyuk saw Conir nodding at him, and Conir’s expression filled with infinite trust and respect for Minhyuk.

‘How can you swing your sword like that without taking enough breaks?’ Conir thought in shock.

However, that was not the end. Just when Minhyuk was about to check the effects of the title...

[Aerod, the God of Disasters and Abilities, has acknowledged you.]

The God of Disasters and Abilities, the very same God that bestowed the earth with the Eight Pinnacle Skills, was also in awe of Minhyuk’s will and determination.

Chapter 366: God’s Ox Bone Soup

Unique Title

? Ellie’s Swordsmanship’s cooldown and MP consumption will decrease by 10%.

? Physical and Magical Defense will decrease by 5%.

Unique Title

? You have acquired the Sword of Absolute Death, a sword skill made from the combination of Sword of Frenzy, Heaven Tearing Sword, and Sword of Tempest.

? A 3% increase in all stats.

? Ellie's Swordsmanship's cooldown and MP consumption will decrease by 20%.?

"Oh my god..."

Minhyuk was very thrilled. He received numerous benefits, even though all he did was concentrate on his task and move repeatedly, as if he was in a trance. Thanks to these two title effects, the high MP consumption of his skills had been reduced by 30%. And there was also the fact that he could combine his three newly acquired Half Pinnacle skills and use it in one go, thanks to the effects of the title '*The One who Exceeded God's Expectations*'.

Simply put, the skill that he acquired from the title's effect was a skill that combined all of the advantages of the three Half Pinnacle skills.

Minhyuk's breath was taken away after he checked the description. He thought, '*This is really crazy...*'

The skill was beyond anyone's imagination. In fact, the Half Pinnacle Swordsmanship that Minhyuk had just learned was already far superior to any swordsmanship that currently existed. However, the Sword of Absolute Death was far beyond his Half Pinnacle Swordsmanship.

'Pinnacle?'

That was right. Just one look and Minhyuk could tell that this single skill had reached the Pinnacle.

Then, Conir approached Minhyuk and said, "It's time for you to go out now."

Minhyuk nodded in understanding. The two of them had made a promise earlier. Conir had promised that he would tell Minhyuk about his own story, his past, and the story of his younger self, once Minhyuk learned and awakened his own Pinnacle. So, Conir started to tell his story.

Aide Ruth felt his heart clench at the sight of Ellie. Her skin was growing darker, and even her face had started to turn black.

'Your Majesty, forgive me for not being able to protect you...'

He wanted to take her place and die for her instead. Ruth had been Ellie's aide and assistant ever since she was born. She might be a woman but she loved to wield the sword more than anybody else. She shined so brightly that anyone could see her brilliance. The late Emperor feared that she would also grow and become a tyrant like him, with the way she liked the sword. Thankfully, she did not.

One day, Ruth asked Ellie, '*Why do you wield your sword?*'

'Aide Ruth, I want to gain the power to protect my people when I grow up!'

'Hoho? So, you're wielding your sword to protect your people?'

'That's right! I'm also going to protect Aide Ruth. Hehe!'

At that moment, Ruth made a vow. He would also protect her with his own life. However, even though he made a vow like that, Ruth could not do anything for her right now, but watch her die. It might not be his fault but nevertheless, he blamed himself more than anybody else.

Then, at that moment...

"Aide, Minhyuk has arrived."

"Let him in."

Minhyuk was one of the few people that Ellie cared for, and loved. Ruth was also very grateful to him. For the longest time, Ellie was like a person that had lost her own personality and soul. She was only the 'Empress'. However, Minhyuk made her smile once again, and showed her that she could also be someone's 'noona', and not just an Empress.

Minhyuk always had a bright and cheerful expression whenever he was with Ellie, while Ellie always had a smile on her face whenever she saw him. But right now, Minhyuk was unusually grave as he entered the room and looked at Ellie. Although he was silent, his breathing was heavy and labored. It was obvious that he was holding himself back.

Minhyuk did not think that Ellie was just artificial intelligence. For Minhyuk, who had shut himself and turned away from the rest of the world for a long time, Ellie was his dearly beloved friend. That was why she was a very precious existence to him.

Ruth bowed silently to Minhyuk and went outside to leave them for a moment. Not long after, Ruth came back with the box containing the Deep Sea Beef which he handed over to Minhyuk.

"Her Majesty told me to give this to you once you awakened to Pinnacle. This is Deep Sea Beef. It came from a legendary cow that only dwells deep under the sea."

"..."

Minhyuk silently accepted the box that Ruth handed over to him. Then, he looked down on the box and asked, "How's her current condition?"

"...It's very bad."

"Can I check it myself?"

"Yes. Go ahead."

Before Minhyuk came here, he stopped by the *Athenae*?Temple and personally visited Saintess Loyna to get the scroll 'God's Eye',?an item that could only be received by *Athenae*?Religion's benefactor. God's Eye was a scroll that could ignore the difference between the level and power of two people and reveal the other person's illness and method of treatment.

[Both the body and the mind are being devoured by a powerful force. It's still in its infancy stage, but is about to reach the middle stages. Once it reaches the late stages, the person will lose all her skills and stats and slowly succumb to eternal rest.

Method of Treatment

: There's no known treatment.]

Minhyuk's heart sank after seeing the method of treatment and the words 'eternal rest'.

'There's no known treatment...?'

Minhyuk could not understand why there was no known treatment. In the end, the patient and silent Ruth burst into tears.

"Sob, sob, sob, sob!!!?Mister Minhyuk! Please, I beg you, save Her Majesty Ellie!!!"

Ruth had already commissioned the best priest in the Empire and discussed the state of Ellie's body. However, he also did not find any cure. Even the best potions and artifacts in the Empire were not working. In a way, he knew that this was just an old man's whims, but Ruth could not help but beg, as if he was grasping at straws.

Then, a quest window appeared in front of Minhyuk.

Minhyuk looked at the box containing the Deep Sea Beef that Ellie had prepared for him. Ellie had always given him delicious food. She would always watch him with a pleased smile on her face, as he ate the food that she gave with relish. This time, it was his chance to make a dish for her.

"I will do my very best," Minhyuk said as he used his *'Create a Recipe'* skill on Ellie. He also made sure to set the buff effect to focus on healing Ellie.

[Creating a recipe that the other party desires.]

[You can now check the recipe for Ox Bone Soup.]

[The amount of buff that can be used has been decreased due to creating a recipe.]

"..."

Minhyuk frowned. He had already focused all of the buff effects to focus on Ellie's healing and treatment, but the expected effect could only delay her condition by two weeks. In the end, a cooking buff was still just a buff, it could not have a permanent effect. Minhyuk's expression was shrouded in darkness for a moment. However, his face soon cleared up.

"What difference will it make if we become frustrated?"

"..."

Meanwhile, Ruth felt his heart throb in pain again, after hearing Minhyuk's words. He had begged Minhyuk to do something, although he knew that it was just a vain, meaningless hope. Since they could not do anything, he tried to grasp straws and asked Minhyuk to do something, but Minhyuk was different. He still had not lost hope, and he would do everything in his capability to make this hope a reality.

"Aide Ruth!"

"Yes!!!" Ruth hurriedly wiped the tears from his eyes as he straightened his posture and answered Minhyuk's words that were filled with great momentum and pride. This was not the foolish Minhyuk that he had seen before.

"Get all the chefs out of the Imperial Kitchen right now."

Minhyuk had already thought about it. The ingredients listed in the recipe from the 'Create a Recipe' skill were the best ingredients among all of the known ingredients. There was a chance that the buff rating would increase if the grade of the ingredients used were the highest.

However, these applied to only known ingredients. Any unreleased ingredients would obviously not be included in the recipe from the 'Create a Recipe' skill.

Right now, Minhyuk had ingredients that were not yet released with him. The first one was the Legendary Sun's Wheat, one of the Five Legendary Ingredients. There were still quite a few left in his hands after he participated in the Gourmet Dragon Banquet. The second one was the Five Legendary Ingredient Box, the reward that he received after winning the Gourmet Dragon Banquet.

Because of that, Minhyuk had two legendary grade ingredients. Besides, there was also the fact that Minhyuk heard the following notification after he created a legendary '*large pizza*'?during the Gourmet Dragon Banquet: '*Perhaps there's a chance that you can make a better dish*'.?The 'Create a Recipe' Skill only showed the buff effect until the '*Legendary*' grade. Hence, there might be a chance.

Minhyuk quickly went to the Imperial Kitchen. Right now, all of the Imperial Chefs had already left the kitchen.

'The notifications meant that there's a chance that I can make something of a higher grade.'

Minhyuk rolled up his sleeves and wore an apron. It was time for him to challenge a new grade of dish for 'Ellie'.

Not too long ago, Black Dragon Order received harsh criticisms from Chinese citizens after they failed to hunt Ellie. There were also countless rankers from all over the world that have pointed their fingers at them. If the Black Dragon Order were able to successfully hunt Ellie at that point in time, the public opinion would not have swayed towards this direction. But, they failed.

In order to calm the public's anger and change their opinion, the Black Dragon Order announced that they would move, and play an active role in the Continent Cloud. This meant that the players from Cairon Continent had gained a huge power. After all, they were players that pushed Ellie to

her limits, even though they failed to hunt her. Although it was not something that they liked, they had already decided to take command and lead their continent to victory.

There were three locations that they wanted to attack. The first was Berdk, located in the Center of Continent Cloud. The second was Atlas, located somewhere at the rear of Continent Cloud and near Asgan Continent. And the third was the Korean Defense Base, the place where most of the Korean rankers had gathered to create a huge defense base. If all three of these places were destroyed, the Cairon Continent would basically win. Just like that, hundreds of thousands of troops made up of players and NPCs began to march forward.

Chinese Rankers, Black Knight Rajan, and Trap Dismantler Hans, together with 1,000 troops, headed towards Food God Minhyuk's Territory, Atlas.

Trap Dismantler Hans was someone famous for being able to see through all kinds of traps and poisons. At night, when all of the stars were already out in the sky, Hans led the Chinese's troops as they moved stealthily. Just like they expected, Trap Dismantler Hans was able to quickly dismantle the traps and poisons along the way and inform them of the path that they should take. The only reason why he could easily do so was because Hans had reached a higher level than the Master Trapper Roadol and Poison Specialist Smooth.

In the first place, Roadol and Smooth were people that had also focused their time to increase their fighting power. So, for someone like Hans, who had focused solely on dismantling traps, it was easy for him to neutralize the traps and poisons that they laid out on the ground.

Black Knight Rajan, on the other hand, was the number one player in the Chinese Knight Rankings. A knight was a class that was armed with quick sword attacks and impressive sword skills. The class was quite similar to a warrior, but knights had the Sword Master Level 1 as their specialty in the very beginning.

Currently, there were plenty of Chinese broadcasting cameras following behind them. Once they reached Atlas, they would immediately begin broadcasting. The reason for the delay was to catch Atlas in surprise. After all, if they start broadcasting even before they arrive, the people in Atlas would be notified in advance.

Finally, they were able to reach the entrance of the magnificent and splendid Atlas Territory. However, what they saw was a man holding a huge dog bowl in front of the gates.

"Chu, chu, chu~? Our Love, Happiness and Hope, aren't you coming out? Are you tired because you took a walk with your dear hyung today? Are you sleeping? Chu, chu, chu~ Hyung wants to sleep with you too~"

This person was the one that the Chinese netizens have scolded as '*Big Head*'. However, he had the name Crazy Priest among the rankers. This person was none other than Locke. The place was covered with darkness and the only thing that they saw was Locke trying to enter the obscure house labeled '*Love, Happiness and Hope*'.

Meanwhile, the live broadcast finally started, and the commentary also began.

[Contrary to his looks, it seems like Player Locke loves cats and dogs.]

[Love, Happiness and Hope... Just by hearing those names, we can already tell that they must be cute.]

[Although we can't see that well since it's dark inside the Athenae game, perhaps they're a special breed like a giant poodle, or a giant golden retriever?]

Then, Carden, the Abnormal State Master moved.

Abnormal State Masters were literally a class under the field of debuffs, with abilities that could give '*abnormal states*' to their opponents. It was a rare class that only existed in China, with less than one hundred holders. Carden was the person that ranked first in the Abnormal State Master Rankings. He was a player that utilized his class the best among the other players of the same class. The only drawback of his skill was the fact that it took a long time to cast.

Locke was currently unaware that the Chinese players were there, so Carden was able to safely finish his casting and send out his abnormal state debuff.

[The Paralyzed One's Shrieks]

[The paralyzed person will not be able to move for five minutes and could only speak. If the caster dies within five minutes, the state will be released.]

"Huh? HUUUUUUUUH? Huh?!"

The abilities of the person that ranked number one in the Abnormal State Master Rankings were amazing. He was able to subject the High Ranker Locke to an abnormal state. In fact, Locke's low Magical Defense also played a role in this.

Then, one of the mage players pounced on Locke and made him fly in the air. The Chinese players, including Rajan, approached Locke.

"Kekekekekeke."

"My goodness. What's this? One of Korea's top rankers sleeps in a dog house? What?"

"Y... you...!"

Locke looked around and saw at least a thousand troops in the area. Their numbers were truly plentiful.

'How were they able to get to Atlas safely?'

Then, Rajan drew his blade.

Shiiiiing—

"Don't worry, I will kill you and the pups that you care about."

"..."

Locke looked at him wide-eyed.

[So, Player Locke is going to die, huh?]

[His death will be in vain.]

But then, Locke smirked and said, "Was it you? Were you the one that placed an abnormal state on me?"

Carden, the Abnormal State Master nodded in answer to Locke's question. Then, Locke asked, "Hey, have you seen Rocket Monsters?"

"Of course, I've seen it! That's a masterpiece... *Cough!* What bullshit are you talking about?!"

Rocket Monster was an animation series that aired in Japan. In this animation, the people would throw small balls and catch the monsters called '*RocketMon*'.

Rajan was a huge Rocket Monster fan. After all, it was a show that instilled hopes and dreams in its viewers!!! And among all of the RocketMons, Rajan liked '*Ppikachu*' the best.

As Rajan tried to hurriedly swing his sword, Locke shouted, "Love, Happiness, Hope!!! Body smashhhhhh!!!"

"...?"

"...?"

[Uhhh... I think Player Locke is still dreaming.]

[*Is he drunk?*]

Just when the commentators were questioning Locke's sanity, and the Chinese players were giggling at Locke...

Thump, thump, thump—

In a split second, really, just a few seconds after Locke's words fell, the whole ground shook. Under the darkness of the night, something that they could not see was approaching fast. Then, a loud bang reverberated in the area.

Baaaaaaaang—

A giant creature suddenly '*Body?Smash*'ed Carden, the Abnormal State Master. The most surprising part was the fact that Carden was instantly forced to log out.

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

The creature that showed up was a five meter tall, shockingly cool, demonic beast, with three heads. It was Cerberus.

The commentators were all in disbelief at the sight.

[That's... that's Love, Happiness and Hope...?]

[Which part of that figure screams Love, Happiness and Hope...?]

[...OMG?]

Chapter 367: God's Ox Bone Soup

The Chinese commentators and the 1,000-strong troops that arrived at Atlas were all flustered.

'Love, Happiness, Hope.'

The name was filled with pleasantness and hope. Whatever good feelings they had quickly disappeared the moment the gigantic Cerberus appeared, and was replaced with a domineering, ominous dread.

Sizzle—

Even the saliva that dripped down their chins had melted the ground. Then, the three heads roared wildly.

“Graaaaaaaaaa!”

“Roaaaaaaar!”

“Grrrrrrrrrrrr!”

[Hell's Gatekeeper's Roar!]

[Your Attack Hit Rate drops by 10% while your Skill Cooldown increases by 10%.]

[Your Physical and Magical Defense have decreased by 15%.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

All of the Cairon Continent players that heard the roar were immediately hit with a debuff.

“What... what kind of bullshit...!”

Even Black Knight Rajan was flustered.

“How can a monstrous beast like that be called Love, Happiness and Hope?!!”

“That's right!!!”

“Your naming sense is trash!!!”

“Boooo!!!”

Rajan and the Chinese players were distracted by the absurd naming sense. Meanwhile, Locke had already been released from his *'paralyzed state'* after the Abnormal State Master had been forced to log out. He tilted his head at them as he grabbed his huge red ax and said, “I think it suits them. You're the ones that have a trashy naming sense.”

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

That was right. Locke had grown very fond of Love, Happiness, and Hope, after taking them on walks! Every time they jumped on him and licked his face, he would think, ‘*Are they going to eat me...?*’. And every time they smelled his butt, he would think, ‘*Do they think that my butt is more delicious...?*’. That might be what he felt, but still!!! Locke had eventually fallen for their charm! And the same was true for the Cerberus. To be exact...

‘He looks pitiful. Let’s help him.’

‘I feel sorry for that human every day...’

‘I think I will cry whenever I look at his face.’

...Cerberus was trying to protect Locke, because they actually felt sorry for his face.

However, one should never forget that Locke was the Crazy Priest that had awakened some of Jeffrit’s powers. In fact, he had been able to awaken more power after he had transferred to High Class.

Jeffrit’s power was a combination of excellent buffs and powerful debuffs. In fact, he was an entity that specialized in ‘*AOE debuff*’. This class was actually very weak when it came to 1:1 PVP matches. However, anyone with this class would gain a huge advantage, exerting great power whenever they dealt with large numbers of people. What more if Locke was with the Level 600 Cerberus?

And... what would happen if he applied a buff to Cerberus?

[Jeffrit’s Blessings]

[All of Love, Happiness and Hope’s stats will increase by 15%.]

[Love, Happiness and Hope’s skill damage will increase by 15%.]

[Love, Happiness and Hope’s skill accuracy rate will increase by 30%.]

A bright light appeared from Locke’s ax. The Chinese players had already launched their attacks just as the light disappeared into Cereberus’ body.

“Wind Cutter!”

“Fireball!”

“Fire Field!”

“Lightning!”

“Fire Storm!”

“Wind Storm!”

The enemy troops had around 30 high-leveled mages. These mage players went on a rampage and sent out numerous magic spells without casting. Even the archers let out their arrows.

“Dragon Arrow!!!”

“Multi Shot!!!”

“Aimed Shot!!!”

“Arrow of Destruction!!!”

Dozens of magic spells and arrows flew towards Locke and Cerberus. At that moment, the middle head of Cerberus opened his huge mouth and sent out a blinding white light.

Flash—

A shocking notification rang in the ears of all the Chinese players present.

[Your skill has been nullified.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

[Aaaaaah! They disappeared in the air!!! All of the magic spells and arrows that the players of Cairon Continent had sent out had disappeared into thin air!!!]

[A very un... unbelievable scene has unfolded in front of our very eyes!!! How can they nullify that many magic spells and skills all at once?!]

[Cerberus is a being that not only appears in the Athenean worldview, but also in ancient times, and has always been hailed as ‘Hell’s Gatekeeper’. If the same is true inside Athenae, then Cereberus is most likely the gatekeeper of hell inside the game too. If that’s the case, we can expect their level to be very high, since Hell is a place that hasn’t been pioneered yet!]

Then, Locke stretched out one of his arms forward. A red energy in the form of a skull shot out and flew towards the bleeding Cairon Continent players.

[Jeffrit’s Skull]

[All of your skills and abilities have been reduced by 10%, while your magical defense and magical attack have decreased by 20%.]

[Your AGI has dropped by 10%.]

The Cairon Continent players were in a fluster after witnessing Cerberus’ buff and Locke’s debuff skills. Assuming that the players present were at Level 300, the amount of debuff that they had received already cost them a 60-level decrease in their power. The worst part was, the higher the level of the players, the greater the impact of the debuff.

In a blink, Locke had already climbed on top of Cerberus.

‘The people in front of us will never set foot at Atlas.’

The members of the Let’s Eat Sect were scattered all over the Continent Cloud. Some were located in the Berdk Attack Base, while some were located in the Defense Base. However, most of the troops in Atlas had been sent out to fight, because they did not think that the Chinese players would

be able to neutralize the traps and poisons set up along the way that easily. The fact that there were enemies present here meant that there was a high chance that the other bases were also being attacked. If they were able to breach Atlas, Locke was sure that reinforcements from Cairon Continent would arrive one after the other.

So, Locke decided that he would do his best to keep them out of the territory.

“Love, Happiness, Hope... Hundred Thousand Volt!!!”

Locke flew up in the sky as frost began to form in the mouth of Cerberus’ leftmost head, while flames began to form in the rightmost head.

Cerberus was a monster with different attributes per head. The leftmost head could use up to the Seventh Tier Ice Magic, while the rightmost head could use up to the Seventh Tier Fire Magic. Their power was comparable to high-leveled mages. In fact, Cerberus also had a tough skin that could not be easily pierced through by any physical or magical attack. They could even devour players that ranked fairly high in the rankings with their mouths alone. On top of that, Crazy Priest Locke would even send them heals. Simply put, Cerberus and Locke were the magnificent and sturdy ‘walls’ that blocked the players of Cairon Continent from entering Atlas.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The blazing and powerful flames sent out by the right head swept through the players of Cairon Continent...

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

...while the cold and bitter frost from the left head covered their bodies and slowed down their advance. Then, there was also Locke.

“Jeffrit’s Fury!”

The two axes in Locke’s hand struck down on his enemies from the sky. Huge explosions bloomed from the ground and engulfed the players the moment the axes fell down on the ground.

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

Today, Locke, who had always been mocked by the Chinese netizens as ‘*Big Boulder*’, had become a myth, and was hailed as ‘*Slaughterer Dog Tamer Locke*’.

Inside the Imperial Kitchen, Minhyuk, who was wearing his apron, opened the ‘*Five Legendary Ingredient Box*’.

[You have used the Five Legendary Ingredient Box.]

[The ingredient that the owner chooses will appear inside the Five Legendary Ingredients Box.]

[It remains unknown whether the ingredient that will come out can be cooked or not.]

Minhyuk could cook the Legendary Sun’s Wheat. However, for ordinary chefs, it was like a ‘*taboo*’. An ingredient that they could never cook. However, once the ingredient was successfully cooked, it could result in a dish that could shock most gourmands to tears.

The problem here was if the ingredient could be cooked or not. ?The ingredient that Minhyuk chose to get from the Five Legendary Ingredient Box was ‘*Marrow Bone*’.

[You have chosen ‘Marrow Bone’ as the ingredient that you will get from the Five Legendary Ingredient Box.]

[Marrow Bone is an ingredient that can help with recovery and bone strengthening.]

[The Five Legendary Ingredient Box is searching for the ‘Fifth Legendary Marrow Bone Ingredient’.]

Ring!

The cheerful ringing of the notification rang loudly in Minhyuk’s ears.

[You have acquired the Legendary Giant Cow’s Marrow Bone.]

Minhyuk immediately checked the information.

? There’s a chance to cure people with incurable diseases.?

? Can greatly recover one’s vitality.

? Once you succeed in cooking the marrow bone, your dish will have the most appropriate taste and deep flavor of the marrow bone.

Based on its special abilities, this ingredient was very different from those that Minhyuk had handled so far.

‘It doesn’t have the concept of increasing the stats or skills.’

Simply put, it was written like that because there was a chance that the dish was not limited by the current grading system, and could climb to a level that was far beyond that. The description also said that the ingredient was extremely sensitive and might turn black with just the slightest of mistakes.

‘Once it turns black, you can’t eat it.’

Minhyuk was now in a dilemma. That was on top of the fact that he needed days to process the marrow bone.

‘The ingredients are all ready.’

The broth would be made using the Legendary Giant Cow’s Marrow Bone while the somen would be made using the Legendary Sun’s Wheat.

‘The meat in Ox Bone Soup goes well with somen.’

Minhyuk personally preferred adding the somen and some green onions to the marrow bone broth that was fresh out of the stove and still boiling, before slurping it with some radish kimchi, or some fresh kimchi. After finishing the dish, Minhyuk liked adding some salt and pepper to the soup instead of rice.

He started cooking to make that delicious bowl of ox bone soup. He first drained the blood from the marrow bone, knuckle bones, and ox foot. Minhyuk was very careful about this part.

‘It’s not good to drain too much blood. The Legendary Giant Cow’s Marrow Bone is literally sensitive.’

That was the reason why Minhyuk had to be extremely careful when removing the blood. Minhyuk patted the blood off of the shank and the brisket. Then, he started boiling the marrow bone.

Next, he poured water into a huge cauldron and let the water boil. Once the water was boiling, he added the marrow bone, knuckle bone, and ox foot inside, before leaving the broth for five minutes. Then, he took out the bones and discarded the water with impurities.

Minhyuk once again poured clean water inside the cauldron and added the ingredients. He needed to boil it under high heat for an hour, then in low heat for the next five hours. Just when he was about to boil the marrow bone, knuckle bones and ox foot...

[The Legendary Giant Cow’s Marrow Bone is certainly different from ordinary marrow bone.]

[You have to shift into high heat, medium heat and low heat to cook the marrow bone.]

“...?”

Minhyuk tilted his head in confusion. This was the ‘*additional explanation*’ from the God’s Cooking Skill that he had learned before. If it were not for these explanations, he would not know how to cook some ingredients.

‘The heat needed changes erratically? This is a really tricky ingredient to process...’

Usually, one needed to boil the bones for an hour in high heat, and five hours in low heat to make ordinary ox bone soup. The more the marrow bone was boiled, the more delicious and nutritious the ox bone soup would become. It was as if the longer the marrow bone was filtered and boiled, the more delicious it became.

However, the steps that he needed to follow to process the Legendary Giant Cow’s Marrow Bone were far more tricky and particular than ordinary marrow bones. Nonetheless, he started the boiling process.

[The Legendary Giant Cow’s Marrow Bone releases a lot of impurities and oil. You don’t have the time to rest. Proceed to filter out the impurities and the oil.]

Minhyuk saw black scum and oil coming out of the bone.

‘It’s black?’

Ordinary oil and scum that was filtered out of marrow bones were usually not as bad as this. The color of the impurities were as black as ink. Minhyuk hurriedly filtered out the oil and scum. Then, a notification rang.

[Quickly turn the heat to medium heat, otherwise the Legendary Giant Cow's Marrow Bone will turn bad.]

"What kind of marrow bone is this...?"

Minhyuk quickly turned the heat to medium heat and filtered out the oil and scum again. He did not have any time to rest. He even had to battle against the exhaustion and fatigue brought about by the hot steam. After four hours, another set of notifications rang.

[You have boiled the marrow bones from the Legendary Giant Cow's Marrow Bone.]

[You cannot eat the marrow bone. Eating it will make your stomach go bad.]

[You can drink the marrow bone broth made from the Legendary Giant Cow's Marrow Bone. It tastes the best and is rich in nutrients.]

[You have to boil it for ten more minutes to get the most authentic flavor of the bones.]

"...!"

The marrow bone had turned transparent as it floated on top of the oil. The soup, on the other hand, had turned milky white. It was really a very tricky, yet amazing, ingredient.

'I wouldn't have been able to cook this if I weren't the Food God.'

Minhyuk felt lucky that he could hear additional explanations to make this dish. However, it was also thanks to the fact that Minhyuk was someone that never gave up.

'Noona, wait for me.'

Minhyuk moved to boil the marrow bone again. He vowed to make the ox bone soup a dish with a never-before-seen grade in order to save Ellie.

Chapter 368: God's Ox Bone Soup

The players of the Cairon Continent, led by Black Dragon Order's Xu Jiaqi, launched a full-scale attack against Berdk Attack Base. With Xu Jiaqi leading the attack, the players of the Cairon Continent were able to continuously advance forward. There were around 30,000 troops from the Cairon Continent that partook in the recapturing of Berdk. The players of Asgan Continent had also started to defend themselves.

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

Powerful attacks flew out of Berdk's magic tool siege weapons and engulfed the players of Cairon Continent.

"Keuaaaaaaaaaack!"

"Ugh, aaaaaaaaaaack!"

“Aaaaaaaaaaargh!”

Half a day had passed since the beginning of their attack. Although the players of Cairon Continent kept on flocking to Berdk, their numbers were slowly dwindling from the huge amount of casualties on their side.

‘Black Dragon Order is hiding in the rear and waiting for the right time to strike,’ Genie thought, standing on the ramparts and watching the entire situation.

Although the Black Dragon Order had taken command of the attack, they still had yet to come forward. It was simply because they did not want to damage the excellent siege weapons in Berdk by sending out hasty and unplanned attacks.

Besides, the magic tool siege weapons had clear limitations. In other words, their bullets would run out. What would happen then? Once that happened, the only thing that the Asgan forces could rely on was Berdk’s solid walls, and they would then wage a defensive battle against the Cairon Continent. The Black Dragon Order planned to move once that time came.

And finally, the imposing Berdk siege weapons that sent out countless overwhelming attacks stopped.

“The siege weapons’ mana has been exhausted!”

“The siege weapons are no more!!!”

The Kharamis soldiers reported quickly as thousands of Cairon Continent players flooded to Berdk. Of course, there was also a significant number of Asgan Continent players concentrated in Berdk. Counting the players stationed at the ramparts, as well as the players and NPCs inside, there were a total of 10,000 Asgan Continent troops inside Berdk. However, compared to the number of players from Cairon Continent, they were just like a drop of water in an ocean.

“Stop them!!!!”

“Waaaaaaaaah!”

“Protect Berdk!!!”

The players of Asgan Continent were shouting frantically. Then, Genie raised her hand high and said, “Fire!!!”

Thousands of magic spells and arrows fell down from the ramparts the moment Genie lowered her hand and gave her order. She also sent her orders to the members of the Let’s Eat Sect Guild.

The members of Let's Eat Sect Guild were divided and stationed at three different places, Atlas, the Korean Defense Base, and here in Berdk. They were currently in a situation where they could not afford to lose even a single place in their hands.

Khan lightly tapped his feet on the ground and flew up. He was now ranked first in the Korean Fighter Rankings. In fact, he could be considered the fastest and swiftest among all of the players in Korea. He was also a fourth dan black belter in Taekwondo.

The players' eyes were attracted by his figure that flew in the sky like a bird.

"Stop him!!!"

"Attack!!!"

"Archers!!!"

The players of Cairon Continent shot their arrows and used their long-distance attack skills. Just then, Khan's body suddenly turned black.

[The Fighter's Shield]

[Your physical and magical defense will increase by 500% for 5 seconds.]

The skill Fighter's Shield was a skill that gave the player an advantage by allowing them to send out attacks, even while the defensive skill was still being expressed.

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

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh!

A cloud of dust bloomed and rose in the sky, as arrows, skills, and magic spells slammed into Khan's body. Once the dust settled, Khan, who was already high up in the sky, lifted his leg.

[Korea's Best Fighter, Ranker Khan!!!]

[Khan's foot is raised high up in the sky.]

Along with those words, Khan's foot turned huge as it fell down on the ground.

[Giant's Falling Press]

[Inflicts an additional 400% damage to an area of 10 meter radius.]

Baaaaaaaaaaaang!

It was like a bomb had fallen on the area. The enemies within a ten meter radius were instantly devoured by the attack and swept away.

Meanwhile, Crow took advantage of the gap and jumped into the fray.

[Tornado Spear]

[A huge rotating spear will drag your enemies and tear them apart while inflicting additional 340% damage.]

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Crow was both a bounty hunter and a spear master, and he was Let's Eat Sect Guild's true and strongest dealer. The enemy troops that were flocking towards them were sucked and dragged by the spear that Crow threw with all his might.

"Ke...keuaaaaaack!"

"Aaaaaaaaack!"

"Keheok!"

In a blink of an eye, more than 30 players had their bodies shredded apart and were forced to log out. Continuing their momentum, Ace stepped forward and shouted, "Red Flames' Hell Chariot!!!"

This was Ace's forte. Four gigantic hell horses covered in red blazing flames appeared, pulling a huge golden chariot.

"Neeeeeeeigh!"

"Neiiiiigh!"

"Aaaaaaaaack!"

The burning hell horses and carriage advanced forward, sweeping away their enemies that were trying to push forward. By the end of the skill duration, the chariot exploded.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

[Sure enough, they are Korea's high rankers.]

[There are quite a lot of Korean rankers that have formed defense teams and are protecting Berdk.]

[Support, through long-distance attacks, are continuously being sent out from the ramparts.]

[However, they need to know that our Chinese rankers are just as great as their Korean rankers.]

Then, at that moment...

"Keuaaaaaack!"

...Ascar's scream rang loudly. Khan, Crow, and Ace all looked towards her direction at the same time. There, they saw Cairon Continent high rankers pushing inside. The one that attacked Ascar was Dark Elf Sonia. Sonia was a ranker that mainly focused on using double swords. She was also a ranker that had changed her species and turned herself into a dark elf.

However, it was not only her, there were also plenty of other rankers surrounding her.

"Giant's Quick Fists!!!"

Punch, punch, punch, punch!

Khan's feet moved swiftly as he sent out a series of attacks, his huge fists aimed at the rankers that attacked Ascar. But...

Grab!

...a man suddenly appeared and grabbed his gigantic fist.

This was a Chinese Fighter Ranker, Liu Yuan. To be exact, he started out as a fighter. However, after practicing various Chinese martial arts, he had transferred classes and became a ‘warrior’. He was also well-known in reality for his martial art skills.

Liu Yuan moved gently, like a butterfly silently flapping its wings, and narrowed the distance between him and Khan in a single step. Then, he struck Khan’s abdomen strongly with his fist.

Punch!

“Keheok!”

[Hundred Step Divine Fist]

[Hundreds of powerful fists stretch out from behind and attack your enemies.]

The Hundred Step Divine Fist dug deep into the pit of Khan’s stomach, despite his high defense and impressive armor. That was not the end. A young girl suddenly moved forward and blocked Ace’s path when he tried to move and join the battle. She was the Ice Sorceress Zhao Jiamin.

Zhao Jiamin might be young, but she was a ranker among the top 30 players in China. And she looked extremely similar to the young ‘Nico Nobin’, a character in the manhwa One Diss that Ace loved.

“Ni... Nico Nobin...? You, you are my ideal type!!!”

“...?”

Zhao Jiamin looked at Ace incredulously as she showed off her skills as an Ice Sorceress.

[Ice Flower]

[Hundreds of flowers made of ice will bloom and attack your enemies.]

Clink, clink, clink, clink, clink—

Hundreds of sharp and deadly ice flowers bloomed beneath Ace’s feet. However, Ace was also a top ranker. He reacted quickly as flames appeared and covered his entire body.

“Uwooooooooooooooh! Nico Nobin! I’m Fire Fist Ace!!!”

Crackle!

The blazing flames that erupted from his body spread out and melted the ice flowers that bloomed on the ground. An ice sword appeared in Zhao Jiamin’s hand, as fire bloomed on Ace’s fist. Ace looked extremely excited as they began to move.

“Nico Nobin! I’m Eunpyong Elementary’s Fire Fist Ace. Let’s have a cup of milk together if I win, alright?”

Ace looked completely serious. However, his words were so greasy that it seemed like he had swallowed an entire stick of butter in one gulp.

“Shut up!” Zhao Jiamin shouted as she swung her ice sword wildly. However, the truth was...

‘A... Ace...! He’s my ideal type in the One Diss manhwa!!! Oh my god. What milk will we drink? He’s so cool!!!’

Zhao Jiamin’s eyes were filled with mist.

‘Fate is so cruel, we can’t be together... Ace...!’

Ace saw the sadness that suddenly sprung up in her eyes.

‘Nico Nobin...!!!’

Then, the two people clashed against each other.

[Aaaah! The Korean and Chinese rankers’ clash!]

[Ice Sorceress Zhao Jiamin and Fire Fist Ace have crossed blades!!!]

[Korea’s Ranker Khan and Warrior Liu Yuan are also fighting a fierce battle!!!]

At first, it seemed like both sides were on par with each other.

[Korea’s rankers are getting pushed back.]

[As expected. There’s nothing that they can do to fight the Chinese players off.]

This was war, not a one-on-one fair duel. Other Chinese rankers would attack the Korean rankers that were already fighting in a battle. Simply put, the Korean rankers were being pushed back from the sheer number of their enemies. Plenty of Korean rankers, including Crow, Khan, Ace and Ascar, had already started to retreat.

“Damn! Dammit! Goddammit!”

“If only it were a 1:1...!”

They had lost the battle against people whose classes and skills were similar to them. It happened the moment the others intruded in their fight. All of the Korean rankers that lost their own battles had expressions that were crumpled and distorted in frustration.

On the other hand, Zhao Jiamin watched Ace running away.

‘Ace, go... quickly...!’

Zhao Jiamin even went the extra mile and froze the ground, causing the Chinese rankers that were secretly following behind Ace, to lose their balance and fall down on the ground.

“Urk!”

“What... what the hell?”

“Zhao Jiamin?!!!”

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”

Zhao Jiamin kept on bowing, pretending that what she did was a mistake. Then, she made eye contact with the escaping Ace, who looked back at her.

“...!!!”

Ace could see her heart and thoughts. And thanks to Zhao Jiamin's 'mistake', Ace was able to enter through the castle's small opening safely.

"...If only I was a bit stronger."

Khan looked despondently down at his fists. They were defeated in a war of numbers. However, he thought that it was just an excuse. Everything would have been different if they had overwhelming power and strength. And everyone standing on the same height and position as him all thought the same.

'If only I was stronger...'

They might have won. At that moment, all of the players that were fighting on the battlefield suddenly stopped. They either stopped swinging their weapons, or unknowingly stopped. This was because of a very shocking message.

[A player that has created something that transcends the Human Realm has been born for the first time in Athenae.]

[This message resonates loudly throughout the entire continent.]

Just this short message was enough to bring confusion to all of the players present.

"Transcends the Human Realm...?"

"Who? Who transcended the Human Realm?"

"What did they make that transcended the Human Realm?"

The players were all murmuring. Among them, Genie murmured to herself, "Transcends the Human Realm...? God class...?"

The first God class item had made its appearance.

Ruth was counting the days. It had already been several days since Minhyuk entered the Imperial Kitchen. He was aware that Minhyuk had not slept all this time. From what he saw, Minhyuk did not have any time to sleep nor rest, as he did his best to cook the marrow bone. According to the most recent report, Minhyuk was already reeling from exhaustion after reaching the limits of his mental strength.

'You can stop now.'

Ruth already knew that it was impossible to save Ellie. The words that he said to Minhyuk were just him grasping at last straws, trying to find a sliver of 'hope'. But now, Ruth already knew that there was no 'hope'. Ellie's illness had already reached the middle stages and was rushing towards the late stages. He was actually hoping that Minhyuk would stop to see her before she died.

'I will never forget your efforts and hard work.'

Minhyuk was already Eivelis Empire's benefactor. Ruth commended his efforts and hardwork, but it was now time to stop. Ruth stood in front of the Imperial Kitchen and slowly opened the door. At that moment...

Flash—

Mysterious pillars of light suddenly fell down from the sky and pierced through the ceiling of Eivelis Empire's Imperial Palace. Amidst all of these lights was a man holding an earthen pot filled with thick ox bone soup. The pillars of light slowly thinned out, as they got sucked into the pot of ox bone soup.

Minhyuk smiled broadly at the ox bone soup and said, "Mister Ruth."

Ruth was left speechless after seeing the amazing sight that unfolded in front of him. Then, Minhyuk continued to say, "We can save Noona."

Chapter 369: God's Ox Bone Soup

Boil and throw the scum away. Boil and throw the scum away.

The process of making the marrow bone broth for Ellie's ox bone soup required a high degree of concentration, constant and swift movements, and high chef skills. Minhyuk did not even dare to take his eyes off of the pot for a moment, in fear of the soup becoming black from accidental neglect.

To avoid all distractions, Minhyuk turned off his whispers and GC notifications. Of course, he made sure to tell Genie the situation that he was in, before he went radio silent. Genie readily agreed and thus began Minhyuk's lonely battle in this quiet kitchen.

The kitchen was literally a steamer at this point, thanks to the constant heat and steam coming from the boiling soup. But Minhyuk continued to stand in front of the pot as he cooked, despite the perspiration dripping down and covering his entire body.

Instead of stopping, Minhyuk just hung a towel around his neck to wipe off the perspiration dripping from his forehead so that no sweat could drop into the marrow bone broth. He had already been repeating the process twenty times. This just showed how difficult it was to process the Giant Cow's Marrow Bone.

When he closed his eyes once, he felt the sleepiness and exhaustion coming over like a tide and washing over his entire body. Every time this happened, Minhyuk would splash his face with cold water to make him come back to his senses.

'The soup has to boil until it becomes milky white!'

Then, the notification rang when he reached his limit!

[You have triggered the Skill: Will.]

[All of your stats, skills, and abilities, including DEX will temporarily increase by 28%.]

[You have gained 1 Will.]

Minhyuk had already lost track of time. He did not know how long he had been in the kitchen, but he knew that this was already the 23rd time that he had boiled and thrown the scum away from the broth. Goodness. All of the chefs in the world would be shocked to learn that he had boiled and removed the scum from the marrow bone 23 times in a row. This just showed how special the Giant Cow's marrow bone was.

[The best broth from the marrow bone is starting to come out.]

[You have to frequently adjust the heat.]

[This is the final stage. One small mistake and the Giant Cow's Marrow Bone will be contaminated and scrapped.]

[Change to medium heat.]

A white, thick liquid began to spread in the soup from the Giant Cow's Marrow Bone. Minhyuk gathered his senses and hurriedly adjusted the heat. Not long after...

[Change to low heat.]

The notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears constantly. Sometimes, it happened every few seconds, sometimes, every few minutes. It was a very strange and mysterious ingredient. Joy was slowly blooming on Minhyuk's face as he watched the soup slowly turn milky white.

Ellie was Minhyuk's noona and dear friend. In the past, she dropped everything and ran straight to the Chocolate Mine when he called for her help. This time, it was his time to return her call.

Just the thought of Ellie eating this ox bone soup made Minhyuk feel happy and calm. He had always received things from others but this time, he was giving his all to make an amazing dish to give to someone else. Then, at that moment...

[Turn off the heat and scoop a bowl of marrow bone broth.]

Minhyuk hurriedly turned off the heat and grabbed an earthen pot. Then, he scooped out a huge ladle of marrow bone broth before pouring its contents into the earthen pot. After ladling out the soup, he quickly added the noodles that he previously made with the '*Legendary Sun's Wheat*' and added a generous amount of brisket, shank, knuckle bone, and ox foot.

'Anyone will be happy if they can find a restaurant that serves a large amount of meat in their ox bone soup!'

Some restaurants would serve a bit of meat in their ox bone soup, and that was it. Every time that happened to Minhyuk, he would always feel disappointed. So to avoid that, he made sure to add a large heaping of meat. Then, he sprinkled some green onions on top of the soup.

'The best time to sprinkle the green onions is when you're about to eat it.'

Then, the notifications began to ring.

[The Somen made from the Legendary Sun's Wheat added in the Marrow Bone Broth will never get soggy and will always maintain the best temperature for eating.]

[The Giant Cow's Marrow Bone has been boiled properly. The meat is tender and the flavor of the soup is rich and deep.]

[You have cooked the Ox Bone Soup.]

[Trance. This is a dish that has your 'hard work', 'passion', 'love for someone', 'spirit of an ideal craftsman', and 'power of a true chef' poured into it.]

[You have made a dish that has transcended the Human Realm.]

And with those notifications, pillars of light fell from the sky, before getting sucked into the bowl of ox bone soup. Not long after, Ruth came in. However, the notifications still did not stop ringing in Minhyuk's ears.

[You have made a God-grade Ox Bone Soup.]

[Since you have made a God-grade Ox Bone Soup, the power that you desired the most will be made 'permanent'.]

['Anonymous' has been announced to the entire continent for your achievement in creating a food closest to God.]

[God's Cooking Skill has leveled up.]

[You will be able to make a better dish.]

[You have gained 100 DEX.]

[You have gained 200 REP.]

[You have gained 100 AP.]

[You have acquired 300,000,000 EXP as a special reward.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled...]

[The marrow bone broth inside the pot has special powers. You will receive an amazing buff effect that has never been seen before, once you eat or cook these marrow bones.]

[The marrow bone broth inside the pot will add a buff effect tailored to the person eating the dish.]

Minhyuk immediately checked the information of the '*Ox Bone Soup*'.

Special Abilities:

? Allows one to overcome any kind of illness or disease.

? The Marrow Bone Soup will help create a harmony between the body and the powerful force ravaging the body. However, this will limit the power that you can use during the process. This problem will be solved by growing stronger through a step-by-step process.

? All stats will increase by +50 and all skills will increase by +1.

? Upon consumption, the probability of dealing a fatal damage increases by 200% while the attack evasion rate increases by 300%.

? Upon consumption, HP will increase by 15,000 while MP increase by 10,000

The abilities of the dish were truly amazing, and that was the situation when the effects of the dish ox bone soup was solely focused on Ellie's treatment. It was also in a state where the additional effects would remain permanent! Minhyuk was truly in awe.

Then, he rushed quickly to where Ellie was currently resting. Ellie's complexion was darker than what he saw the last time. Even her veins were bulging and swollen.

"Noona will get cured once you feed her this ox bone soup."

"You're saying that... once she eats this ox bone soup then...?" Ruth said as he looked at the still steaming ox bone soup in the earthen pot.

He had also seen the pillars of light get sucked inside the pot of ox bone soup. However, he still thought that this was just an ox bone soup. But even if he thought like that, this was still the ox bone soup that Minhyuk worked so hard to complete for Ellie. So, Ruth carefully received the ox bone soup, before discreetly checking the information of the dish.

'This is unbelievable...!'

Ruth was struck dumb. The ox bone soup had the power that transcended the human realm. This was a dish that only a true God could make!

"*Sob, sob, sob, sob, sob!*?Thank you!!! Thank you very much!!!"

Ruth was in tears as he knelt down and prostrated in front of Minhyuk.

At first, Ruth wondered how a fool could appear in front of Ellie. He truly could not understand. Why did Ellie love him so much? Why did she care about him so much? But as time went by, he realized why. And today, that very same fool had saved Ellie.

After telling Ruth to feed Ellie the ox bone soup the moment she woke up, Minhyuk returned to the Imperial Kitchen. Once Ellie ate the ox bone soup, she would be completely cured. This thought made Minhyuk feel much lighter.

Then, he saw the marrow bone broth left inside the cauldron. At a glance, the amount left inside the cauldron was enough to serve ten people. According to the notifications earlier, the marrow bone broth itself has an amazing power.

'I also worked very hard...'

Minhyuk felt the pangs of hunger, and his overwhelming appetite tugged him towards the food. This was the marrow bone that created a godly dish! He quickly filled another earthen pot with the marrow bone broth. Of course, he made sure to add somen made from the Legendary Sun's Wheat and plenty of meat.

Then, he sat down with his steaming ox bone soup, shining red radish kimchi, and well-ripened kimchi. Minhyuk also made sure to sprinkle green onions on top of ox bone soup. He grabbed a spoonful and took a sip of the soup. Minhyuk was amazed by the rich and savory taste of the marrow bone broth the moment the soup touched his mouth.

"Wow..."

‘Is this really something that I made? It tastes so good that I can’t even believe it.’

Minhyuk grabbed a pinch of salt and seasoned his bowl properly. When he found it to be moderately salty, he dug in with his chopsticks and grabbed a mouthful of somen. Minhyuk personally preferred eating almost all of the somen first, leaving only a bit with the soup before adding some rice in it. Then, he slurped the somen. The chewy somen created a perfect blend with the thick and rich marrow bone, and gave out a pleasant flavor. Then, he grabbed another mouthful of somen, but this time he added some brisket into the mix.

“Sluuuuuuurp!

”

He slurped the somen again, before taking a bite of some kimchi.

Crunch, crunch—

Eating somen with perfectly ripe, sweet, sour kimchi, was like an icing on cake. He ate somen again. This time, it was with rice.

“Hiyaaaaa.”

Minhyuk pressed the rice with his spoon in the marrow bone soup. The combination of the rice and the milky white soup was so harmonious, that it was like art itself.

He scooped a spoonful of marrow bone broth, rice, brisket, and the final touch, the brightly colored radish kimchi that could stimulate the appetite, was placed on top of the spoonful. Just like that, Minhyuk brought the entire spoonful into his mouth.

Crunch, crunch, crunch—

As soon as he placed the spoonful in his mouth, he tasted the marrow bone soup, the rice and the sweet, sour rice kimchi. The flavor of each ingredient blended together and created a harmony that was perfection itself. Then, Minhyuk lifted the entire earthen pot, blew a little on the soup, before gulping it down.

“Sluuuuuuuuurp!?!Kyaaaa! This is so refreshing!”

The soup was really the best! Just like that, Minhyuk continued to consume his ox bone soup until the bottom of the pot started to peek at him. He quickly lifted the pot again and tilted it, before scraping the remaining rice and soup and bringing it to his mouth.

Minhyuk patted his bulging stomach after eating everything. Then, he wiped his greasy mouth with a napkin, and drank a cup of cool, refreshing water.

Gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp—

After drinking everything, Minhyuk could not help but burst in awe, “Kyaaaah!”

Minhyuk had been extremely hungry after not being able to eat properly the past few days. He was already in that state, then he tasted the most delicious ox bone soup in the world. It was only natural that he was in awe of its flavor. The surprise did not end there.

[You have eaten an Ox Bone Soup made from the leftover Special Marrow Bone Broth.]

[Your HP and MP reserves have increased by 1.6x.]

[Your Skill Cooldown has been reduced by 40%.]

[Your Physical Attack has increased by 30%.]

[Your Skill Attack has increased by 30%.]

[Your Physical Defense has increased by 30%.]

[Your Magical Defense has increased by 30%.]

[Your Critical Hit Rate has increased by 30%.]

[Your Evasion Rate has increased by 300%.]

[Your EXP Acquisition Rate has increased by 300%.]

[All of the skills in your repertoire will exert more power than usual.]

[The buff will last for three days.]

“...?”

Minhyuk doubted his ears for a moment. A 1.6x increase in HP and MP reserves? A 40% decrease in skill cooldown? There even was a 30% increase in physical attack and the like. For example, if Minhyuk was at Level 500, then, he could already exert the power of someone at Level 680 with this. The most surprising thing about this was the fact that it would last for three whole days, and to think that there was still quite a lot of marrow bone broth left.

Minhyuk was in awe. However, at the same time, he also truly felt lost. He felt like if he could continue going on at this rate, he would really become invincible. However, the thought only lasted for a fleeting moment.

“Urk...”

Minhyuk was really tired. He had been awake for days on end in *Athenae*?ever since he started learning the Pinnacle from Conir. After saving Ellie, he finally relaxed and the exhaustion began to engulf his entire body. For now, he should log out.

After Minhyuk logged out, he ate his cherry tomatoes and salad, before drinking water and was already getting ready to get a good night's sleep. On his way to bed, he passed by the people hanging out in the living room. Sitting in front of the TV were his dietitian, Hye-Jin, and personal doctor, Lee Jinhwan. Then, he heard the desperate cries of the Korean commentators.

[The players and NPCs around Berdk will get wiped out!!!]

[The remaining troops inside Berdk Castle have to do their best to defend the base.]

[But the number of troops that they have shaved off from the enemies are only a few. And there seems to be significantly less troops left inside Berdk castle.]

[Right at this moment! There are 3,000 additional Chinese troops marching towards Atlas, Food God Minhyuk's territory!!!]

[Cerberus and Locke had shown an incredible show of power by keeping a thousand troops at bay. The Master Trapper and Poison Specialist and Black Mage Ali have joined them in Atlas! But, even though they have hundreds of Atlas soldiers left inside the territory, will they really be able to fend off more than 3,000 enemy troops?]

[The players in the Korean Defense Base are getting pushed back!!!]

[We can't beat them with their huge number of troops!!!]

[Aaaaaaah! Is this how Korea will lose in the Continent Cloud?!!!!]

[If they completely pry away victory from our hands, the players of Cairon Continent will definitely invade Asgan Continent.]

[All I can see is darkness. Is there any way for us to get out of this desperate situation?]

Minhyuk turned around again. It was only for a moment, but he saw the exhausted faces of Genie, Khan, Locke, and the rest of the Let's Eat Sect Guild. Even Conir and Aruvel looked tired from the long and overdrawn battle.

'Just wait a bit, the marrow bone broth is coming.'

Minhyuk headed straight back to his *Athenae* capsule.

Chapter 370: Turning the Tide of War

The people in Berdk Attack Base were in a desperate situation. The players and NPCs that fought outside the base and blocked the enemy troops had already been wiped out. The number of troops left inside Berdk numbered 3,000 at most. On the other hand, the enemy troops advancing towards Berdk were around 20,000. These troops were an alliance of players and NPCs sent to recapture Berdk!

"We're in trouble!"

Genie frowned after hearing the urgency in Lucia's voice. The mages and archers continued to shoot their arrows and magic spells, preventing the enemies from sticking to the ramparts. However, keeping the enemies in check through this method was already impossible. Their attacks were being reflected back.

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

The magic spells sent by the mages were being deflected away to hit the ramparts, while the arrows sent by the archers were being reflected and sent back to target their necks. This was all because of the hundreds of mirrors floating around Berdk.

'Master Reflector, Xu Jiaqi.'

She was the one that led the Black Dragon Order to attack Ellie not too long ago. The only reason why she appeared now and not during the previous battles was because she felt that the battle right now had become easier.

"Don't you think it's high time you surrender? Hoho!" Xu Jiaqi laughed derisively as she tapped her lips with her thin and slender fingers. She was obviously mocking them.

“You won’t last long anyway,” Xu Jiaqi said, before looking up at Genie.

In fact, what she said was true. There was a high possibility that they would not last any longer. Even if the battle had dragged on and turned into a long-term one, they would not have any chances of winning.

Genie, who was standing on top of the ramparts, smiled and said, “Guys, they want us to surrender?”

“Huh?”

“What did you say?! But I’m really busy!”

“...They... they want us to commend her. Noona?”

“...”

“...”

“...”

Everyone turned to look at Ace blankly after hearing his words. The members of the Let’s Eat Sect Guild, who were moving busily, peeked out from the ramparts and looked at Xu Jiaqi. Then, all of them raised their middle fingers at the same time and said...

“But we don’t want to?”

“...”

Xu Jiaqi’s expression was distorted in anger after hearing their answer. For some reason, she felt that the Let’s Eat Sect Guild always had that unpleasant energy radiating off of them. However, Xu Jiaqi planned to wash off the shame that they received from their recent Ellie hunt.

‘As long as we kill Genie, the former Legend Guild Master, and her colleagues, victory will definitely be in our grasp.’

Then, Xu Jiaqi took out the trump card that she had hidden. This was something that they had acquired from Black Dragon Vormon, one that could summon Vormon’s Subordinates. Black Dragon Vormon was an existence that long reigned supreme. This just meant that Black Dragon Vormon’s Subordinates would also show great power.

Riiiiiiip—

Hundreds of black holes twisted and opened in the air the moment Xu Jiaqi tore apart the parchment. Then, monsters started appearing from these twisted spaces.

“Kraaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Kraaaaaaaaaack!”

The first noteworthy point was the monsters’ extraordinary builds. An ogre with red skin and a height of seven meters appeared out of one of the twisted black holes. And that was just the beginning. There were also trolls, orcs, and many other monsters. The other monsters seemed to be around five meters tall and were almost comparable to giants. To top it all off was the fact that these red-skinned ogres, trolls, and orcs were all equipped with armor made of dragon bones.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud!

“Shit...!”

“The... the ogre’s advancing! What the hell!!!”

Around 800 monsters appeared and began to advance towards the ramparts together. Xu Jiaqi had already checked the durability of the ramparts earlier.

[The Berdk Ramparts have received 1,414 damage.]

[The Berdk Ramparts have received 1,624 damage.]

And just like they had expected, Berdk’s ramparts truly boasted a high defense that was worthy of the best base in the entire Continent Cloud. Even if the rankers slammed into the ramparts, they could only deal around 4,000 damage altogether.

But, what would happen if the ones that slammed into the ramparts were the summoned monsters?

“Graaaaaaaaaack!”

One of the gigantic red-skinned ogre swung its axe and...

Baaaaaaaaang—

[The Berdk Ramparts have received 6,541 damage.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Genie and the players inside Berdk were shocked and terrified at the huge amount of damage.

In the first place, Vormon’s Subordinates had their own purpose and objective upon their summoning, and the summoner could choose what kind of objective that was during their first summon. They could summon the defensive type, the slaughterer type, or the siege type. For the defensive and slaughterer type, the summoner could summon around ten times more than the number of the monsters that were currently summoned. On the contrary, the siege type was comparably smaller in numbers, but there would be an additional 250% damage to the wall whenever they attacked. They also had a 50% damage reduction from siege weapons, on top of their incredibly high HP and defensive power. In other words,

Black Dragon Vormon’s Subordinates had become a specialized and optimized ‘*siege weapon*’.

Baaaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaaang—

Each of their attacks could shake the entire Berdk castle.

“Great Spear!!!”

Crow, their strongest dealer, tried to stop their attacks by targeting the head of one of the ogres that had come closest to the ramparts.

Shwaaaaaaaaa!

A powerful spear flew at an incredible speed and slammed into the ogre's head.

Stab—

“Guooo...?”

“...?!”

However, the ogre just nonchalantly pulled out the spear that got stuck on its head. Crow hurriedly used his retrieval skill to get his spear back.

Scratch—

“Guo... Graaaaaaack!”

Then, the ogre struck the walls again.

Baaaaaaang—

“Sh... shit...!”

That was right. Their enemies were more like the undead. They did not die even after receiving fatal attacks. Even the archers were having a hard time trying to pierce through the dinosaurs' thick skin due to their high defense against magical attacks and skills. Just like that, hundreds of monsters created a united front to slam on the ramparts of Berdk.

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

Not long after, explosions rang loudly. These were the harbinger of despair that Berdk.

Atlas.

Black Mage Ali, Crazy Priest Locke, Cerberus, and Kaistra were the key figures in the defense of Atlas Territory. However, no matter how strong they were, the constant influx of enemy troops proved to be too much. Once the enemies breached their defenses and created a path, the troops behind them would follow behind and march through that path.

Among the 700 troops initially left in Atlas, only 200 had survived so far. It did not matter how powerful the soldiers of Atlas were, they were no match against the sheer volume of their enemies. On the other hand, the number of the enemies kept on increasing. Once they had successfully hunted and killed 1,000 enemy troops and there were only 2,000 left, another 2,000 strong troops would arrive and fill in the gaps left behind by the dead.

“Don't falter!!! Food God Minhyuk's army can't lose this territory!!!”

Death Corps' Soldier Park was able to reunite with his late mother to give her a tight hug, thanks to Minhyuk. That was not all. Minhyuk was a good lord to them. He trained with them, ate with them, and also worked together with them. And all of the soldiers of Atlas territory agreed with Park.

Stab—

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

They were in a situation where a single soldier had to deal with hundreds of enemies alone. And in this chaos, a spear suddenly appeared and pierced through the advancing Soldier Park. But Park held onto his spear tightly. Even if they died here, they would still be able to be resurrected back in Asgan Continent. That was the '*Power of the Continent Cloud*'. However, even if they knew that, everyone still dreaded and feared death. Soldier Park firmly grabbed the enemy's spear and pulled it off of his body.

Spurt—

"...You, aren't you a crazy bastard? Huh?!" One of the Chinese players spat out unintelligible words in a fluster, as Park squeezed out the power from his body and stabbed him in his abdomen.

Thuuuud!

Then, Park kicked the body away. He was already in a state where he did not know how many enemies he had killed. His entire body was even covered with blood and he felt extremely exhausted and dizzy. However, he endured it.

"Protect Atlaaaaaaaas!!!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!"

There were only around 200 soldiers left, but they were all squeezing out the remaining strength in their bodies to protect the territory. Then, the notifications rang for Locke, Black Mage Ali and Kaistra.

[The Atlas' Soldiers' morale has increased.]

"For real..." Locke murmured in awe. He was impressed by how much power that Minhyuk could bring out from his people. However, their situation was still quickly approaching hopelessness.

Slash!

Locke cut down another enemy! Then, he tried to trigger his skills to deal with the dozens of enemies rushing towards him.

[You cannot trigger your skills. Your MP has been exhausted.]

"God f*cking damnit!"

This was mainly due to the long and exhausting battle that they were in. Even their mana and HP potions had already been exhausted.

"Keuaaaaack!" Kaistra screamed, as someone punched him while he was still sitting on top of Penrus, the Incarnation of Light.

"Grrrrrrrrr!"

Penrus unleashed a powerful, majestic aura to protect his master. The incarnation of Light's fur exuded a blinding white light! However, the opponent in front of him was none other than Arcas, a

player that had awakened the Pinnacle. Perhaps Penrus could prove to be a worthy opponent against Arcas if he was in a healthy state, but Penrus was exhausted right now. Then, at that moment...

Craaaaaaaack—

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

A powerful fist struck strongly on Penrus’ body and made him fly back!

“Pen... Penrus!!!”

“Grrrrrrrrrrr...”

Despite collapsing from the blow, Penrus still struggled to stand up and protect Kaistra. However, Kaistra held him tightly. He said, “No... no more. Get some rest, Penrus.”

Kaistra did not want to see Penrus get hurt any further. So, he sent him back to the summoning room and grabbed his spear tightly.

“The summoner is going to fight with a spear?” Arcas said, looking at Kaistra in interest. Then, Kaistra rushed towards him with all his might.

Flash—

Kaistra had been hunting wild animals since he was young! Because of that, Kaistra’s spear had become fast and accurate. However, this was the game.

Stab—

They could not go beyond their stats, skills, and level. Arcas grabbed Kaistra’s spear and said, “Kid, where is your king?”

Kaistra just smirked at Arcas’ words and said, “In your ass?”

“...”

Arcas learned one thing. The people that followed and served the Food God were all stubborn and filled with pride.

‘This is something that is worthy of great envy.’

Even if this was a game, how could one player win the hearts of so many people in the world? However, this was still just a game. And just when Arcas was about to smash Kaistra on the head...

Baaaaaaaang—

...a huge flame engulfed Arcas’ body. He faltered, but he did not feel too much from the hit. After all, he had a very high magical defense. He even had the passive skill ‘Magic Armor’, that reduced magical damage by 50%.

This was the magic that Black Mage Ali had casted. Ali was the only one left in commission and he was using his magic and Blink appropriately. He was demonstrating the power of someone that could summon infinitely by summoning hundreds of snakes and using them to absorb MP.

Just like that, Ali continued to fight, and tried to run away from Arcas. He and Arcas were an extremely bad pairing, as he could easily die under Arcas’ hands. And then...

“Caught you.”

This was Arcas’ trap. He had deliberately attacked Penrus and grabbed Kaistra’s spear. That was the opportunity he was looking for, and in an instant, he had narrowed the distance between him and Ali.

Light Step. It was a skill that could narrow the distance between him and his opponent, as long as they were within a 15 meter radius.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang!

Arcas grabbed Ali by the collar and slammed him on the ground.

“Keheooooook!”

[Your HP has fallen below 50%.]

No skills were used, but his HP dropped by a lot. Then, thousands of players circled around them and pushed the remaining Atlas forces behind. Just when Arcas was about to slam his fist on Ali’s head again...

“Kieeeeeeeeeeeek!”

The huge Predatory Snake appeared from Ali’s hand and tried to devour Arcas, who just slammed the Predatory Snake with his huge fist.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

“Cu, Cupid-chan!!!” Ali shouted in despair. If only he were a bit stronger.

‘Goddamnit... If only my magical attack is stronger...’

Mage Ali had climbed to the top. However, no matter how much he looked at it, his magic did not work on Arcas. This was his limit. He was only up to this point.

“Love, Hope, Happiness!!!” Locke shouted as he rushed to the bloodied Love, Hope and Happiness.

Even though they were a demonic beast that came from hell, it was still difficult for them to deal with thousands of humans by themselves. The truth was it was ‘Arcas’ that had made Cerberus feel bad. They could see Arcas asking Ali with their own eyes.

“Where is your king?”

But, Ali just smiled at him and said, “Minhyuk? Didn’t you check your ass?”

Fwoooooooooooooom—

Arcas struck down on Ali’s face without any mercy.

Washington D.C., United States of America.

In a large cafe inside the city, the Americans’ attention was all focused on the TV screen showing the showdown in *Athenae* between South Korea and China.

“In the end, China wins against South Korea. And they did not even use much force.”

“Even the strongest territory in Korea is helpless in front of them.”

“Compared to what I heard, Black Mage Ali looks a bit sloppy.”

“The Koreans can only reach that far. How strong can they even be?”

However, they still admitted one fact.

“The NPCs are giving their all to protect a territory where players gather.”

“Even the guild members are desperately trying to protect their lord.”

“We have to admit how united the Koreans are, right?”

There was one guy among them. He was none other than Team Leader Park. He came to America to meet with some of the *Athenae* executives from all over the world to discuss *Athenae*: World War, which was just around the corner.

“Here’s the americano that you ordered.”

“Ah. Thank you,” Team Leader Park graciously accepted the coffee, his eyes never leaving the TV screen.

On the screen, Ali remained helpless as he got stuck on the ground. Team Leader Park felt numb. The Atlas players and troops were being pushed back to a corner and being shown what despair was like.

Team Leader Park smiled dejectedly and thought, ‘*In the end... is there nothing we can do...?*’

He had faith in them and he held immense hope. However, the situation remained desperate. Immersed in bitterness, Team Leader Park turned around.

Just as he was about to leave in a hurry...

“Huh?! What the hell?!”

“What’s that?”

“The Chinese troops are dying!!!”

“...?”

Team Leader Park quickly turned back to look at the screen. And on the screen, he saw a man moving quickly to where the Chinese troops had gathered. Every time he moved, hundreds of blades appeared from his body and brutally devoured and slaughtered them. The players from Cairon Continent were easily swept away like autumn leaves on a windy day! Arcas moved to smash Ali in the face.

[Where is your king?]

[Minhyuk? Didn’t you check your ass?]

When Arcas’ fist was about to slam down...

Spuuuuuurt—

Blood spurted out of Arcas' back. Was it a skill? No. It was just a swing of the sword. Simply put, it was just a simple attack. However, Arcas, who had not screamed at all from all of the attacks that he had received, suddenly screamed in pain.

[Keuaaaaaaaaaack!]

And the man that slashed Arcas' back said...

[Did you just bully my friend???]

Team Leader Park smirked before turning around and leaving. He murmured to himself, "You guys are XXX."

The Food God had appeared.