

## Gourmet 401

### Chapter 401: The First God Rank Artifact

What kind of an existence was the Death Guide? The truth was, there was only one Death Guide, a fact that was contrary to what the Rocard Kingdom believed. And this person happened to be Death, an unofficial Korean ranker that had been working under a thin veil of mystery for the longest time.

Death transferred to the Black Wizard class and accidentally reached the God Class 'Immortal'. The Immortal class was simply put, a higher rank of the necromancer class. The biggest reason why his existence remained unknown was...

*'Undead summoning.'*

The ability to summon a huge number of the undead had allowed him to forego participation in any party hunt. The Immortal's summons were completely different from an ordinary necromancer's summons, which had given him the leeway to work independently.

Death was one of the few people that had received the Black Dragon Vormon's quest. He was the one that found the Death Knights and the souls trapped in their bodies. He had struggled desperately to gather all of the legendary souls. He also did his best to grow stronger and eventually gained enough foothold, becoming Black Dragon Vormon's Undead Corps' commander.

But after all those hardships, what the hell was happening right now?!

Death thought that he could continue digging through and pushing the Asgan Continent to its limit with Black Dragon Vormon's Undead Corps as long as he remained alive. However, Vormon had died and Death was left with no choice but to give up on his dreams. However, even if he gave up on that dream, Death still had the power to swallow a huge dungeon or field by himself.

Yes, he had power that was comparable to the Summit Five.

Each of the players hailed as the Summit Five had the power to fight against an entire kingdom by themselves. However, Death was different. He could fight against an entire kingdom thanks to the power of the undead that he summoned.

So, he made a decision. Death, who had become the king of Vormon's Undead Corps, knew that the Undead Corps would disappear forever a month after Vormon's Death. However, he thought that it would be a pity to simply lose them like that.

If Death risked everything and attacked Asgan Continent, he was sure that Ellie and her troops would decimate them. Therefore, he needed to increase his power. Besides, he did not want all the time and effort that he invested into Vormon's Undead Corps, as well as his plans on building an undead kingdom, to go to waste. So, he decided to plunder the Hybrid Race living under Vormon's protection.

Death wanted to gain their special crops and special artifacts! On top of that, he also wanted to gain money by selling the Hybrid Race as slaves! That was right. He planned to destroy the lives of thousands of people in the Rocard Kingdom, just for his own personal gain.

However, something unexpected happened. Golden Mage Ali and Minhyuk had suddenly appeared. The outstanding men from Atlas came and trashed his Death Knights. But not long after, Minhyuk disappeared to who knew where.

“Where did he go?”

Death did not know where he went but there was one thing that he was sure of. Ali and the Food God might have appeared as variables but he would still be able to succeed in his quest to plunder the Rocard Kingdom. Death wanted to squeeze the Undead Corps until the very end and make them exert their strongest power before they disappeared completely.

Furthermore, as the Immortal and their king, he would also be able to temporarily exert the strongest power he could muster. Death decided to use this opportunity to push through. He might not know where the Food God went, but he knew that he would be gone for a while. So, he once again launched an all-out attack.

Alas, another unexpected thing happened.

“What the hell?!”

Five hundred of Rocard Kingdom’s elite soldiers suddenly became more powerful. These soldiers were barely able to deal with the skeleton knights before, but now every single one of them could fight against three or four by themselves! This was something very surprising.

*‘Don’t... don’t tell me!’*

Death had a hunch that this was all thanks to the Food God’s power.

*‘Yes! It must definitely be the Food God’s excellent buff abilities!’*

However, that thought was unbelievable, so he shook his head. If he continued to think in that direction, then it meant that he was not denying the fact that the Food God harbored power that was beyond any common sense.

Even if he was not using Vormon’s Undead Corps, the number of undead that he could summon were usually around 2,000. However, the Named NPCs that the Food God had summoned in this battlefield, together with the mighty elites of the Rocard Kingdom, as well as Ali, were more than enough to deal with those undead. Death needed to prepare another move.

That was when he brought out two small decrees. These parchments were something that Vormon had handed over to him when he became the commander of Vormon’s Undead Corps. These were decrees created with Vormon’s amazing magic and brilliant mind.

*‘Undead Strengthening Decree.’*

*‘Powerful Undead Troops Production Decree.’*

The Undead Strengthening Decree had the power to increase the power of Vormon’s entire Undead Corps right now. Vormon had intended to use it later during the battle of the continents. Of course, by then, the number of undead in their hands would be replenished, although it did not come to be.

On the other hand, the Powerful Undead Troops Production Decree was a special parchment that could produce Vormon’s Undead Corps. And the one that could produce these troops was none other than Immortal Death. Death used this excellent parchment to produce several incredibly powerful units of undead every day. However, the only downside was that these troops were disposable. Thankfully, the parchment could accumulate the troops that he produced everyday. It

was because of this that Death had refrained from using the parchment and opted on accumulating the troops that he could produce. It was only today that he thought of using them.

Death immediately tore the Undead Strengthening Decree. The moment he tore the parchment, a black current swirled over the heads of the undead and got sucked into their bodies.

“Kiheeeeeeeek!”

“Kyaaaaaaaaack!”

“Kihyaaaaaaaaack!”

Notifications rang for Death alongside the roars of the undead.

[You have used the Undead Strengthening Decree.]

[All of Vormon’s Undead Corps’ abilities have increased by 1.3x.]

[Their HP reserves have increased by 1.5x.]

And it did not end there. With his God Class Immortal, he gained a new set of special skills. He could designate a place and make the area around it a ‘death zone’. Death raised his staff encrusted with black gems. A powerful wave of power stretched out from the staff before seeping down into the ground just below the gates of Rocard Kingdom.

Shwaaaaaaaa—

Then, a black aurora stretched out and covered a radius of 30 meters.

[Death Zone]

[Those that stand inside the Death Zone cannot use any skill or potion.]

[You cannot use any special power to stop the Death Zone.]

[The skill has a 30 minute duration.]

That was right. Death Zone was a skill that restricted anyone within its radius of effect from using any of their skills and potions. However, as long as they escaped the 30 meter radius of the Death Zone, then it would be alright.

However, with the enemies in a position where they had to protect? The moment they stepped back, the gates would be taken over. It was a fact that they were forced to defend their gates. Simply put, this ability was very much perfect for their situation. And finally...

Riiiiip—

[You have used the Powerful Undead Troops Production Decree.]

[You have awakened the 3,151 Powerful Undead Troops that have been produced and accumulated in the decree.]

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

The ground suddenly cracked the moment the decree got ripped into two. Creatures with thick, bony, yet sturdy arms, broke out of the ground. Some appeared while wearing crowns on their

heads, while some wore black full-plate armor on their bodies. These were the strong troops that Death had produced everyday.

When he produced these troops, Death had placed one word among each and every one of them. And that word was none other than 'Lord'. The name of these armor-clad undead were 'Skeleton Knight Lord'. At first, he added the word to distinguish them from the other undead. But with the crown on their heads, the name sounded perfect, so he used the word on all of them. The level of the skeleton knight lords were around Level 490. But, was that all?

Bang, crack, bang—

Giant bone drakes appeared as the ground exploded once again. They were also wearing huge crowns on their heads! Their defense was unimaginable that it was safe to say that they were breaking the balance. It was beyond what any ordinary player could deal with. In fact there would not be any difference between them and those Named NPCs over on the other side.

However, their HP was less than 1,000. With their defense over 10,000 and HP less than 1,000 it was clear how much of a help they would be. But with their almost impregnable defense, even with their extremely low HP, they would still be able to exert a tremendous force in the battlefield.

Thuuuud!

Even among the undead, their size was overwhelming. They were six meters in height! They were named 'Lord Legends'. That was right. Death's naming sense was among the worst! But it did not matter, he was currently intoxicated by power and in ecstasy.

"I really gave the Lord Legends a nice name! As expected of me..."

He must have been a genius! He was completely unaware of the stinky and cringy name that he had given. However, unlike their stinky names, the six meter tall Lord Legends had similar defenses as bone drakes, while their attack was similar to those of the Death Knights. Even their HP was quite significant.

Simply put, they harbor a lot of power!

"Clean them up!" Death ordered as the strong troops moved forward.

"Heok! I... I can't use my mana!!!"

"The land and the trees won't listen to me!!!"

"Everyone, retreat!!!"

"What nonsense are you talking about?!!! If we retreat, then who will protect the gates?!"

The Death Zone had brought chaos and confusion to the Rocard Kingdom troops. Its sudden appearance meant that they would have to use their bare bodies to defend the gates. And the six Lord Legends clashed against Minhyuk's exhausted Named NPCs.

Baaaaaang—

Stones and dust splashed around as one of the Lord Legends struck its sword down on the ground. Ben hurriedly avoided the attack as he stabbed it accurately on the forehead. However, he failed to deal any damage.

“What kind of...”

The Lord Legend sent another attack to the shocked Ben. Conir, Aruvel, Corr, and Cerberus were also in a similar situation. The worst part was that there were new types of undead coming up from behind! The skeleton knight lords with their clattering bones stuck to the gates while the bone drakes slammed their gigantic bodies on it.

Baaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaang—

Ben, Aruvel, Conir, and the rest of the troops, including the soldiers of Rocard Kingdom, could only flee inside and block them by closing the gates. All they could do was block the gates with their bodies to stop them from being opened.

Baaaaaaaang—

Dozens of bone drakes continued to slam into the gates at Death’s order.

“Keheok!”

“Kgggggghhkh!”

They screamed as their bodies bounced off of the gates.

“Attack!” Beth ordered loudly. However, their arrows just bounced off of the bone drakes’ bodies and did not do any damage at all. It was clear that their defense was very high! But what made them feel more desperate was the fact that their skills had been restricted.

“Ali, if you use Turn Undead at a distance, then...”

“I don’t have enough MP.”

They were in the worst situation possible. Ali could release his snakes and prey on his enemies’ MPs, but that only worked for the living. He could not prey on the bony undeads’ MP. But, even if that was the case, they would not let the undead get past them easily.

“Block them with your bodies!”

“Stop them!!!”

“Open the gates for a moment, our First Unit will take that opportunity to go out. Make sure to immediately close the gates right after we go out!!!”

Those that were already on the brink of death volunteered to go out of the city once the gates opened. Then, they fought against the undead just right outside. Those left inside saw how the First Unit fought against the undead right at the entrance of the gates.

“Quick, close the gates!!! Keuhaaaack!”

“Close theeeeem! Aaaaaack!”

“Bennet! You must survive! Close the gates!”

Screams rang loudly in the area as they got stabbed by spears and blades. They cried loudly as their bodies spurted out blood. The people of Rocard Kingdom had no choice but to close the gates in tears and reluctance.

All of them were of the same mind. They all had a firm will and determination to protect their kingdom! Under these dire circumstances, they were able to hold out and protect the gates for twenty minutes. Alas, they were already at their limits.

“Keuhahahahahahaha!” Death laughed viciously.

He would build his ‘Kingdom of the Dead’ by plundering and looting the Rocard Kingdom! Then, the gates slowly began to open.

“Keooooook!”

“Keuaaaack!”

The undead once again stepped foot inside the kingdom through the open gates.

“Kill all of the Food God’s subordinates!”

They said that the Food God would become a king. But the first king would be him, and him alone. In reality, he might be someone that could easily be ignored and could not do anything. However, in this place he would be the king.

*‘Even if I can’t do anything in reality, I will still become king here!’*

The cries of the people that he put into despair did not register in his ears. Only the fact that one of the Lord Legends had broken through the gates entered his mind. This was the Lord Legend that had power comparable to a Legendary Named NPC! And it will slaughter hundreds of these people for him.

Just when Death was about to grin widely...

Crackle!?

Bang, bang, bang!

A mysterious, yet domineering, blood-red lightning bolt fell down from the sky and struck the Lord Legends. The lightning strike had wiped out dozens of undead in one go.

[Three Lord Legends has been destroyed.]

[Forty one Skeleton Knight Lords have been destroyed.]

“...?!”

The Lord Legend that was comparable to a Legendary Named NPC was thrown away in one strike?! However, it did not end there. Another set of notifications rang the moment the unidentified lightning bolt struck down again.

Crackle!

Bang, bang, bang!

[Five Lord Legends has been destroyed.]

[Thirty four Skeleton Knight Lords have been destroyed.]

Crackle!

Bang, bang, bang!

[Fifty four Skeleton Knight Lords have been destroyed.]

“...?!”

Death suddenly turned flustered. What the hell was that skill and how the hell did it have that much power? Then, it made him think, *‘But skills can’t be used inside the Death Zone, right...?!’*

He could not understand what was happening. Finally, the figure that struck down his Lord Legends appeared in front of him. The man was none other than the Food God. The Food God held an unidentified blood red sword which he brandished once again.

Crackle!

Bang, bang, bang!

Another blood-red lightning bolt fell down from the sky and annihilated everything that it fell down on.

*‘Im... impossible! Does he have the power to neutralize the Death Zone?’*

Common sense told Death that it was impossible. The Death Zone was an ability that ignored any kind of power or ability that could stop it. However, this was the Food God, and he might really have that kind of power.

So, Death decided to use one of his skills. This skill was none other than ‘Enemy Troops Observation’. This skill was very useful in creating the undead. This skill would observe the enemy’s active skill and develop a sub-par, yet compatible, active skill that the undead could learn.

[The Enemy Troops Observation has started.]

Ring!

[The Enemy Troops Observation has been completed.]

[There are no skills that are currently being used.]

[The attack is an ordinary attack.]

The moment Death heard the notifications, he recalled...

“Ordinary attack...?”

... he recalled what the players called attacks like this. A direct and basic attack.

Chapter 402: Vassal Brod

After restoring Athenae’s Beef Tenderloin using his Material Restoration skill, Minhyuk immediately started cooking.

When requesting for medium rare, in terms of degrees of steak doneness, it could be considered slightly undercooked. Quite a lot of people preferred this doneness, especially with its perfectly charred outside and juicy insides. Thus, medium rare was the perfect doneness for those that were still new to steak.

Minhyuk seasoned the meat and tried to start grilling on his now well-heated pan. But before he could do so, a set of notifications rang in his head.

[God's Cooking Ingredient does not recognize and approve of you.]

[You will receive a huge restriction while cooking.]

"...?"

Minhyuk looked at the notifications in doubt. It did not recognize and approve of him? What did it mean?

*'Are you telling me that I'm not yet at the level where I can handle God's Ingredient yet?'*

This was the only conclusion that he could come up with. Minhyuk might have a God class, but he was not yet a 'God'. The *Athenae* management had also informed him that he was not a true 'God', but a 'candidate' to become one. Even if Minhyuk had made a 'God-grade' dish, the ingredients that he used back then were only the 'Five Legendary Ingredients'. These ingredients were inherently different from God's Ingredients.

However, even after knowing that, Minhyuk did not have the leisure to back down and step away from this challenge. He quickly placed the steak on the frying pan to grill it. But then, at that moment...

Sizzle—

...around a hundred droplets made of light appeared on the surface of the meat before shooting toward Minhyuk.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

[God's Barrier has interfered with you.]

[Your HP has dropped below 85%.]

"Keheek?!"

It was only then that Minhyuk realized that the attack of those light droplets was beyond what he could imagine. He was so shocked to discover that these droplets, which looked smaller than his fingernails, could deal so much damage to him.

*'If things continue at this rate, then I will die cooking.'*

However, Minhyuk did not have any other choice.

Sizzle—

He had already placed the steak on the pan, and it was already starting to get cooked. The way to cook steak was short and simple. However, it was vital that the meat get flipped at the right time. If he missed the timing even just by a little, *Athenae's* Beef Tenderloin would be turned into scrap.



The notifications before just told him that he was not acknowledged, but it did not mean that he could not cook the ingredient. This meant that Minhyuk could cook it using any method possible. However, if things continued at this rate, he might die while cooking. That was when Brod stepped forward.

“I will try to stop this power.”

“You’ll do that?”

Brod nodded. And just when Minhyuk grabbed the tongs to flip the meat...

[God’s Barrier has interfered with you.]

This time, there were more drops of light that shot out to attack Minhyuk. But then...

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

...Brod started splitting the small drops of light.

‘*Crazy...!*’

Minhyuk looked at him in shock as he continued to cook. However, despite Brod’s spectacular display, he was still unable to block all of them. There were hundreds of droplets, and it would only take two seconds for these droplets to hit Minhyuk. Within that time frame, Brod was able to cut down 90, while the remaining 10 continued to shoot toward Minhyuk. Then...

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

...Brod used his own body to stop the water droplets. Minhyuk could tell that he was suffering from immense pain. As a player, he did not really feel that much pain from these attacks, but for Brod, an NPC, Minhyuk was sure that the pain would be borderline torturous.

But Brod just frowned and continued to swing his sword toward the forming droplets of light. The ones that he could not stop with his sword, he used his body to block.

“*Spat!*” Brod suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood. He did not even mutter a sound, but it was obvious that he was suffering from the drops of sweat that covered his body. Brod staggered and in the end...

Thud—

...he was forced to support his body with his sword as he collapsed on one knee. Shockingly, he did not let out a single groan from the pain.

“Are you alright?”

“Don’t stop!!! Don’t ever stop!!!”

“...Yes.”

Right then and there, Minhyuk decided to concentrate and put his all into cooking this steak. As he grilled the meat, Minhyuk thought that the figure that blocked the attacks for him was dazzling and

eye-catching. Brod was fighting with his life on the line for Princess Iris whom he loved since he was a child. And his will to save his beloved was clearly transmitted to Minhyuk. At that moment, Minhyuk thought that he did not want to see these two people part ways forever. Unknowingly, Minhyuk fell into a ‘trance’.

Sizzle—

And finally, he flipped the steak for the last time and grilled it for a bit more.

Thuuuud—

Brod had collapsed on the ground, but Minhyuk did not hear it. However, there was a smile gracing his lips from the notifications that announced the completion of the dish.

[You have completed the Filet Mignon Steak.]

[Trance. It is a dish that has your ‘Admiration for Love’, ‘Efforts’, ‘Hope’ and ‘Courage to Offer Everything’ poured into it.]

[This dish is graded Legendary.]

[You have gained 30 DEX.]

[You have gained 200 REP.]

[You have gained 5,000 AP.]

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

[You are the first player that cooked a God’s Ingredient!]

[You have gained 500 REP.]

[You have gained +20 on all five of your basic stats.]

[You now have the privilege to cook one dish using God’s Ingredient without any restriction.]

Only then did Minhyuk have the time to look at the collapsed Brod. He slowly stood up with a smile on his face despite the blood dripping down his body. Brod was the one that took most of the damage, but there were still droplets that occasionally slipped through him and dealt huge damage to Minhyuk and made him bleed all over. The two, who were covered with blood, were smiling at each other. The scene was bizarre, yet wonderfully warm.

“Quickly give the steak to Iris...”

“Of course!”

Minhyuk hurriedly moved to hand over the steak to Iris. But then, he thought of a problem...

*‘Will she even be willing to eat it?’*

Just when this thought passed through Minhyuk’s head, her eyes that had turned black turned to look at him. Then, she reacted to the steak, “The dish called steak that I wanted to eat! The steak that I really wanted to eat! Hihihihihhi!”

It might be true that her mind was blurred and being controlled by the brainwashing, but there were still parts of her memories that remained clear to her. Iris hurriedly grabbed and ate the steak. And fifteen minutes later...

Iris stared at the bleeding Brod that was lying on her lap. Brod, who had endured for a long time, had reached his limits and eventually collapsed. Iris patted his cheeks gently and lovingly. Brod smiled at her as he lifted his sword to Minhyuk.

"Boy. This is yours now. However, I have a favor to ask of you. Please save her kingdom."

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Then, Minhyuk heard the quest completion notifications. He also heard the notifications about gaining Iris' Authority. Minhyuk was shocked when he checked the description, but he did not have much time and quickly rushed out.

Iris watched Minhyuk's departing back, before saying, "Sir Brod."

"Yes, Your Highness?"

Brod, who regained his senses, looked at Iris with a smile on his face.

"I gave him two of my most powerful authorities. I did a good job, right?" Iris sniffed as tears fell down her cheeks.

Brod grinned and said, "You did a really great job."

At the same time, Minhyuk had arrived at the gates, only to discover a new type of undead. He moved quickly to block them and stop their advance at the front of the gates.

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Death had no choice but to be shocked. Basic attacks, in gaming terms, were general attacks that did not use any skills. And yet, the basic attacks that were sent out just a few moments prior had destroyed many Lord Legends.

But was that the end?

No. Every swing of his sword had destroyed dozens of Skeleton Knight Lords and turned them into dust.

Baaaaaaang! Baaaaaaaang!

In the end, the man destroyed all of the undead that slipped past the gates before coming out of Rocard Kingdom. The man ordered the people of Rocard Kingdom to close the gates as he dashed in the middle of thousands of undead.

"Kyahaaaaack!"

"Kiyeeeeeeee!"

"That's right! These drakes have extremely high defenses! What can you do against hundreds of drakes when you can't use any skills?! Huh?!"

Death was thrilled. It was foolish of him to come out alone, especially against him that could control the undead during battle. His powers were far beyond any of the ordinary necromancers who could not control the majority of their summoned undead.

“Everyone, kill that guy!!!”

Hundreds of bone drakes made the ground shake and tremble as they rushed toward Minhyuk! At that moment, Minhyuk jumped up and slammed his sword down strongly on the head of the drake leading the pack.

Crackle, crackle—

Baaaaaaaaang!

A bloody lightning bolt fell down and devoured the surrounding area. The lightning strike decimated a huge number of drakes leaving no traces behind.

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

Minhyuk quickly advanced among tens of thousands of the undead. And this was him still in the ‘Death Zone’! Each swing of Minhyuk’s sword created a bloody lightning bolt that struck down and devoured the undead in his path. Even the aftermath decimated those that surrounded him.

*‘It’s the sword! It’s the sword!’*? Death finally realized that it was Minhyuk’s sword that was creating that special effect.

Death’s ‘Enemy Troops Observation’ would succeed in its observation and search if his enemy used an active skill. It was because of this that Death reached a very surprising conclusion.

*‘What kind of passive skill is that...?’*

A passive skill could blow up an area with a radius of ten meters? Passive skills were inherently different from active skills. For passive skills, a critical damage or special attack would only be triggered based on chances and luck. Compared to active skills, some could not be easily used and could only be up to one’s pure luck.

But right now, every swing of Minhyuk’s sword triggered a passive skill that engulfed the entire battlefield. That was when Death suddenly realized something...

“Hi, hiiiiik?!”

The thought brought horror to Death. Minhyuk only needed to take one step, just one step, and he would get out of the Death Zone. Two steps and he would reach his vicinity. Three steps and he would be right in front of him.

“Stop hiiiiiiim!”

Those were just basic attacks. But the advantage of passive skills was that they could be applied to ‘continuous attacks’ and ‘AOE attacks’. For example, the skill ‘Light of Death’ was a skill that could stab the enemy’s vital points ten consecutive times in a split second. But what if the assassin had a chance to double the damage that they could inflict in an instant with their passive skill? What would happen if that passive skill was triggered? Then, the assassin’s attack would become much stronger. On top of that, passive skills were heavily influenced by ‘luck’. Simply put, one could

trigger three critical hits after those ten stabs. So, what would happen if that powerful passive skill was triggered continuously?

Then, at that moment...

Step—

...Minhyuk left the sphere of influence of the Death Zone. The moment he stepped out of the area, hundreds of golden leaves started to fall and flutter around him!

“Fluttering Sword.”

The falling leaves turned into sharp sword lights that cut through the undead.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

Even the mysterious passive skill was triggered as dozens of bloody lightning bolts fell down from the skies.

Baaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaang—

The aftermath of the passive skill blew away an area with a radius of dozens of meters. The notifications that resulted from this attack brought terror to Death.

[The notification cannot determine the exact amount of damage received by the undead.]

[Analyzing the total damage incurred. 4,151 Skeleton Knights, 1,111 Skeleton Mages, 130 Skeleton Knight Lords and 120 Bone Dragon Lords have been destroyed.]

“Hiiiiiiik!” Death shrieked when he heard the notifications. He took a step back only to fall down on the ground. This was the power that only one player exerted?!

*‘Summit Five...?!’*

It was a personal power that could rival a kingdom. It had to be his own personal power, otherwise, Death could not explain it at all.

*‘They said that he was weak!’*

For a moment, Death wanted to argue with the people from all over the world. The experts from all over the world and the people from the global community sites evaluated the Food God as just some pretty good ranker.

However, the power that he was demonstrating right now was not just a pretty good ranker! A single attack from him had made more than 5,000 undead disappear in an instant!

“Gasp, gasp!” Death gasped heavily. This was a very unexpected situation.

*‘Wait... I still have a chance.’*

That was right. After all, Minhyuk was alone among thousands of his undead! Besides, the people of Rocard Kingdom and his Named NPCs were already exhausted! Just when the thought crossed Death's mind, Minhyuk looked around as he continued to stand still in the middle of the tens of thousands of undead that rushed towards him.

"Earth King's Authority," Minhyuk said as he looked at the undead flocking towards him.

"Worship."

Baaaaaaaang—

At that moment, Death felt a suffocating pressure press down on him. His entire body trembled from the pressure and fear. It was so scary that he almost wet himself. The scene that unfolded in front of Death made him shudder in fear. Tens of thousands of undead knelt down and heeded his every word.

Worship. That was right, they knelt down in worship. All of the undead knelt down and showed their reverence, as if they had accepted Minhyuk as their king.

Chapter 403: Vassal Brod

Kings and emperors were key figures in the *Athenae* worldview. They were existences that were responsible for maintaining the balance of the world. Kings were, of course, somewhat inferior to emperors. After all, a few kingdoms had to unite to produce a power that could rival an empire. But among these kingdoms, there were some special kingdoms whose kings had authority.

The number of things that were yet to be revealed in the *Athenae* worldview was something that no one could fathom. One of them was that it was not easy for a player to obtain the King's Authority. There were plenty of requirements for a player to obtain the King's Authority.

One, the player should be preparing for, or had already received a Kingdom Building Quest. They should also have the territory, people, capital funding, and individual power. On top of that, they had to inherit that power from a king.

But what kind of an existence was a king? Although kings lagged behind the emperors, they were still beings that stood at the apex of a kingdom as absolute rulers. Inheriting the authority from them was not an easy task. And the authority that Minhyuk had received was none other than the Earth King's Authority, which stood among the high ranking King's Authorities.

The system originally set that the king could only let a player inherit one authority. But when Iris came to herself, she saw the bleeding Brod and Minhyuk, and knew that this foreigner named Minhyuk had risked his life to save her. So, she bestowed upon him two of the strongest powers among the Earth King's Authority.

These were the notifications that Minhyuk heard upon the completion of his quest:

[The favor that you have received from the Rocard Kingdom's Queen Iris has reached the highest level!]

[You have gained 100 REP.]

[You have gained +10 on all of your stats.]

[Iris has bestowed upon you the Authority held by the Earth King.]

[You have acquired the Earth King's Authority. Worship.]

[You have acquired the Earth King's Authority. King's Eye.]

[Rocard Kingdom's Guardian has given you a blessing for inheriting the Authority.]

[The Authority Buff has been triggered. During the buff's 12 hour duration, you will be able to exert three times your original power.]

King's Authority

? The power that it can exert depends on the amount of Authority Mana gathered. When triggered with only the minimum Authority Mana required, it can force your enemies within an eight meter radius to kneel in worship. This cannot be triggered against an opponent that is far stronger than yourself, unless you fill your Authority Mana to 100%.

? The enemies that are forced to kneel down in worship will be put in a stunned state. The amount of time that they would remain in that state will depend on your luck.?

? The enemies that are forced to kneel down in worship will have a 50% reduction in both their physical and magical defense.?

Minhyuk looked at the term 'Authority Mana' curiously as he read the authority's description. The sudden appearance of a new term made Minhyuk quickly click on its detailed description.

[Authority Mana is the mana used to trigger and cast the King's Authority. You can gradually accumulate Authority Mana by quickly hunting enemies in a short period of time, dealing a huge amount of damage and fighting against more enemies than your side. The more Authority Mana you accumulate, the stronger the power you can exert.]

The concept was very easy to understand. In RPGs, or 1v1 martial arts games, there existed a special absolute kill move, also known as 'limit breaks' or 'Musou'. The more one fought against their enemies, the more their absolute kill gauge increased. The concept of this absolute kill gauge was similar to the concept of 'Authority Mana'. For Minhyuk, this was a power that would allow him to shine during 'group' matches.

Then, there was the King's Eye.

King's Authority

? You can check the NPC's stat window even if they are not your subordinate or vassal.

? However, if your favor with them is low, you will not be able to check their stats.

The King's Eye was a skill that was useful in many ways.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk's Authority Mana rose at a rapid pace as he continued to fight against tens of thousands of undead. Those were tens of thousands of undead! This meant that it was very easy for Minhyuk to trigger linked attacks and continuous strikes. He could also deal a huge amount of damage in a short amount of time.

However, the amount of physical damage that he dealt to his enemies did not really hurt them. Nevertheless, he continued to attack until his Authority Mana reached 88. Once it reached that number, Minhyuk made sure that he was at the center of the undead before using his newly acquired authority.

[You have used Earth King's Authority. Worship.]

[The Authority Buff has been applied. The effect of the skill will be three times stronger than normal.]

Baaaaaaaang—

Minhyuk was very surprised to see the effect of the skill once it was cast. Tens of thousands of undead knelt down in front of him to worship him as their king. Minhyuk watched as tree roots, and even the ground itself, restricted the undead from moving, a sight that was invisible to them, but was clearly visible to him.

[The chances for triggering the stunned state have been triggered. Your enemies will worship you for seven seconds.]

The only reason why Minhyuk was able to let thousands of his enemies kneel down to him was because of the 'Authority Buff's 3x effect. Even the eight meter radius of effect for the minimum Authority Mana had been extended to 50.

And finally, there was also Minhyuk's first God-rank sword, the sword that he received from Brod.

? A 33% increase in STR, AGI and STM.

? Passive Skill: Supreme Sword Mastery has reached Level 9

? Cutting Power and Penetrative Power has increased by 50%.

? Critical Hit Rate has increased by 40%.

? Attack power will double against the undead. All passive skills' chances of getting triggered will be at 100% against the undead.



Minhyuk blinked blankly at the description. His Devil Judge's Sword was an Absolute Demigod Artifact with 1,002 ATK, proving itself to be the strongest sword in the world.

So, what about the Continent Destroyer's Sword that had reached as much as 1,914 in attack?

It could easily trample over the Devil Judge's Sword. It even had a 50% increase in cutting and penetrative power against ordinary enemies, and a x2 increase in attack against the undead.

The cutting and penetrative power of a sword were very important factors. In *Athenae*, the amount of damage that would be reflected in real-time was largely dependent on how big and how deep the attack was.

But, the surprise did not even end there.

[You have become the new owner of the Continent Destroyer Sword.]

[The Passive Skill: ??? will dramatically awaken the owner's power and reinvent it into a new type of passive skill.]

[The Continent Destroyer Sword is searching through your artifacts and passive skills.]

Ring!

[Lightning has been selected.]

[Artifact Skill: Lightning has dramatically increased in power.]

Ring!

Artifact Skill

### **Mana Required**

: None

? You can choose between the two modes: Explosion and Destruction.

? In Explosion mode, you will have a 25% chance of triggering bolts of lightning with 1,000% additional attack and 600% additional damage in a five-meter radius for every basic attack you launch.

? There is a 3% chance of your enemy falling into a three-second stunned state after getting struck by Explosion.

? In Destruction mode, you will have a 15% chance of triggering eight bloody lightning bolts with additional 800% damage for every enemy.

? There is a 20% chance of your enemy falling into a two-second stunned state after getting struck by Destruction.

That was right, the Continent Destroyer Sword's newly created Lightning skill had two modes that could easily be used. Minhyuk only needed to mutter or think about 'Explosion' or 'Destruction' and the mode that he had chosen would be engraved on the blade of the sword.

Right now, Minhyuk's sword had the word 'Explosion' engraved on it, which allowed him to annihilate his enemies easily.

However, even if that was the case, how could a passive artifact skill be triggered with each and every strike that he made?

This was only possible thanks to the Continent Destroyer Sword's effect: *'all passive skills' chances of getting triggered will be at 100% against the undead*. The God of Death had bestowed this power upon the sword because it did not want those that wished for immortality to remain in the world. And this became the reason why the sword's attack had become overwhelmingly strong.

"Kihyaaaaaaack!"

"Kieeeeeeeck!"

"Graaaaaaack!"

Minhyuk looked at the tens of thousands of undead that had fallen into a seven-second stunned state after being subjected to Worship. Then, for the first time, he used the active skill attached to the Continent Destroyer Sword.

*'This is a name that fits my dad's style. He will definitely like it if he hears it.'*

The skill name was very much in line with a chuunibyou's style. But the moment Minhyuk cast the skill, a tremendous force appeared around Minhyuk. When using a skill for the first time, there was a choice where one's character could move automatically according to the skill's notifications and Minhyuk had chosen to use this.

Daaaaash—

Minhyuk leapt high up in the sky with the blood-colored sword in his hands pointing straight toward the ground. He took advantage of gravity and used its momentum to stab his sword into the ground.

Baaaaaaang—

The moment the sword touched the ground, all of the undead around him disappeared into nothingness.

Crack—

Even the ground started to crack and twist, which increased the skill's range and allowed it to devour more undead.

Crack—

Crack!

Crack!

Minhyuk stood at the center of the twisting and cracking land, as it continued to extend forward and devour the undead. It was literally a disaster, which spread outward until bloody lava erupted from underneath and flowed out onto the ground.

Shwaaaaaa—

Shwaaaaaaaaa!

The lava slithered and flowed all over the place, melting away the undead that it passed along the way. In this way, the Continent Destroyer Sword had given the impression that it could destroy everything and anything in its path through this small area of land. With just one attack, more than 8,000 undead had been wiped out and disappeared into nothingness.

“Hiiiiik!” Death screamed in horror. Was that man really human? There were only 30,000 undead left in his troops.

Suddenly, at that moment, a woman stood on top of the walls, raised her hands and said, “Earth King’s Authority. Worship.”

Thuuuuuuuuuuud—

And once again, the undead were forced to kneel down in worship. But this time, they were facing the woman standing on top of the walls.

“I, Iriiiiis?!” Death shouted as he rubbed his eyes in doubt.

Queen Iris was supposed to be under Vormon’s brainwashing and was supposed to help him gain victory! So, what was happening?! Death pondered for a moment. Then, he easily found the reason. After all, he knew about that person’s existence.

Mercenary King Brod, also known as God’s Empire’s Knight and the Strongest Swordsman, stood beside Iris on top of the walls. He took a sword handed to him by one of the soldiers as he flew towards the undead kneeling down and worshipping Iris.

“Mercenary’s Pinnacle Swordsmanship Chapter 2. Death’s Wolf.”

Shwaaaaaa—

The sword that Mercenary King Brod was using was just an ordinary sword that the Atlas soldiers used. However, hundreds of bloody sword lights appeared and stretched out from this ordinary sword and jumped around like wolves fiercely running and climbing the mountains to bite the necks of their prey.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

A tremendous amount of force swept through and slaughtered thousands of undead as Brod flew up in the sky.

“Mercenary’s Pinnacle Swordsmanship Chapter 4. Wolf’s Kill.”

Flaaaaash—

A ten-meter sword light stretched out of Brod’s sword. And when he slammed his sword on the ground...

Baaaaaaaaang—

...all of the undead that received the brunt of the attack disappeared without a trace as the ground split in half.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

He only swung his sword once, but dozens of undead had disappeared without a trace. Minhyuk quickly joined in the fight. In the end, it only took both men thirty minutes to finish off the undead. After they cleaned up everything, Minhyuk looked at Brod in shock as he thought, *'He's as strong as noona.'*

Minhyuk was confused. Ellie was an Absolute Supreme NPC. But what Minhyuk did not know was that although Ellie awakened as an Absolute Supreme NPC, she still had yet to acquire her full power as the Continental Emperor.

Ellie still needed to follow a step-by-step process and grow stronger before she could acquire that power. Only then would she be able to display a power that was several times stronger than what she had now.

On the other hand, Brod had already reached his strongest state. Simply put, in terms of growth potential, Ellie had greater potential than Brod. However, Minhyuk could confidently say right there and then that Brod, in his current state, was the strongest among all of the NPCs in the entire continent.

Just when this thought flashed in Minhyuk's head, Brod suddenly turned to look at him. Minhyuk looked at him in doubt, only to see him kneel down on one knee and say, "My king. Please allow me, Mercenary King Brod, to stay by your side."

[Mercenary King Brod swears his eternal loyalty to you.]

There were two thoughts that floated in Minhyuk's head. One was that another mouth had been added to the list of mouths that he had to feed and the other was...

*'So suddenly?'*

Chapter 404: Vassal Brod

Brod, who was still lying on Iris' lap, was gradually getting healed thanks to Iris' power, 'King's Warmth'. By the end of it, he had mostly recovered from his injuries. Brod coughed in embarrassment as he lifted himself off of Iris' lap. But, despite the embarrassment, the two were smiling brightly at each other.

"I'll go and help him now."

Iris nodded before asking, "You've seen him, right? What kind of person is he?"

"...He might be a foreigner but he's a trustworthy man. I saw plenty of things from him."

Mercenary King Brod, with almost 200 years of experience, was very confident in his eye for people and how he assessed them. He could tell what the person was like as an individual.

"He's a very strange man."

The boy, who had eaten the same steak that Iris ate earlier, smiled brightly. His smile was like that of a child's, pure and bright.

"And? What else?"

Brod wondered why Iris kept on asking about the boy. Was Iris also aware that the boy risked everything to save her life?

"He's different from me. He looks like he cares deeply for his people."

That was right. He cared deeply for his people. The boy constantly looked outside of the room, his face filled with concern while he cooked earlier.

Iris smiled, "Sir Brod."

"Yes, Your Highness."

Iris' voice was different from when she asked him about the boy. It was now filled with dignity and solemnity. Brod knelt on one knee and looked at her seriously.

"Live for him from here on out."

"What do you mean by that...!" Brod's eyes widened as he shouted in a fluster. He thought that they would live together for the rest of their lives after they had confirmed their love for each other. Yet now, she was telling him to live for someone else? He could not understand at all.

"Don't deny yourself with what you truly want, Sir Brod. We both know that you still want to go further and reach higher places. I'm the only reason why you came back to this place."

Brod became silent at her words.

She was right, there were a lot of things that he had experienced in the God's Empire and he was only forced to come back because of Iris' situation! In fact, he had been truly reluctant to leave and reminded himself that he had to return to protect Iris.

Iris was aware of this and did not want to be a hindrance to him. However, even if Brod felt reluctant to come back, that was then and this was now. He did not want to part ways with her now that they were together. He wanted to protect her with his sword, just like what he promised her all those years ago.

"But..."

Iris interjected before he could even finish his words, "Sir Brod."

"Yes, Your Highness!"

Iris' voice was solemn and dignified, yet there was an unmistakable tremor beneath it, "I command you, in the name of your Highness. Protect Food God Minhyuk and his territory, and fulfill your dreams of creating the most powerful Empire."

On top of that, Iris' reasoning was sound and valid.

“I will also engage in diplomatic discussions with them. I will make sure to give them a lot of help.”

This was an order in Iris’ capacity as Queen. Even though Brod wanted to refute her so badly, his trembling heart betrayed him. All he could do was remain silent at her order. Mercenary King Brod was a man of great ambition. It was a waste for him to live in the peaceful lands of Rocard Kingdom.

In the end, Iris said, “I love you, Brod.”

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Brod looked up at Minhyuk as he knelt down on one knee. This man was his and Iris’ benefactor. He felt at ease with him. For some reason, Brod felt like he could achieve anything as long as he stayed with him. It was not just because of his promise with Iris. He himself wanted to place his bet on Minhyuk.

Minhyuk did not hesitate for a long time and agreed to it.

[You have accepted Mercenary King Brod as your vassal.]

[You have gained 300 REP.]

[All of the stats of the troops in both Valhalla and Atlas Territories will increase by 10%.]

[Mercenary King Broad is the widely recognized king of millions of mercenaries all over the world. He will do his best to make the Atlas and Valhalla Troops the strongest in the land.]

?Passive Skill: Dreaming Genius

?Active Skill: Mercenary’s Pinnacle Swordsmanship

?Active Skill: Continent’s Tyrant

*‘Crazy...! He’s way stronger than Conir and Aruvel?!’*

Conir was the Sword Saint while Aruvel was hailed as the Demon World’s Great Sage. Both of their powers were already beyond anyone’s imagination. However, Brod was more powerful than them. Then, Minhyuk looked at Brod’s passive skill, ‘Dreaming Talent’, in contemplation.

Passive Skill

Minhyuk was in awe after seeing the words *‘he will be able to reach the pinnacle’* in the description. After some thought, Minhyuk realized that it had been quite some time since he last accepted a vassal. He started to wonder about what task he should give him, to the point that his expression turned grave. Brod, who saw the solemn expression on his face, looked at him in doubt.

“Please stand up, Brod.”

“Yes, my lord,” Brod answered as he stood up. He knew that Minhyuk would give him his orders now. He felt huge expectations for Minhyuk’s orders. After all, Brod could make the entire continent tremble in fear! He was Mercenary King Brod!

Meanwhile, Minhyuk continued to ponder deeply about the task that he wanted to give Brod. Brod could tell that the man in front of him was a very outstanding and eye-catching man.

*‘That’s right. He’s the man that I believe is most suited to become an emperor! What kind of task will he give me?!’*

Then, Minhyuk said, “Brod, I hope that you’ll be able to take on this important task in Atlas Territory from here on out.”

“Please give me your orders, my lord.”

The scene in front of them was the scene of a lord and his kneeling vassal. Brod had shown his firm will and determination by killing tens of thousands of undead, which Minhyuk answered in kind by giving him a very important mission. It was like picture-perfect scenery.

Minhyuk spoke, “You will be in charge of the territory’s livestock.”

“As you ordered! I will now be in charge of the territory’s livestock...! Huh?” Brod stopped in his tracks. He was in doubt for a moment.

*‘I’m in charge of... what? Livestock means animals like pigs, cattle and chicken, right?’*

“Li... livestock?”

“Yes. This is a very important task. Pigs, cattle and chicken will taste differently depending on how they are raised. Fufufufufufu!”

Something was wrong here. Was this man, his lord, not aware of who he was and what kind of existence he was? At that moment, a few people appeared and surrounded Minhyuk. Brod could feel a huge amount of pressure from these people.

*‘They’re on par with me in terms of strength and power. So, these are the key figures around the lord, the knights of Atlas territory!’*

The old man’s gait and posture was fierce and unusual, while the aura on the boy’s sword was suffocating. Brod could even hear the cries of the enemies that it had cut down. In fact, one of the men that stood with Minhyuk had an overwhelming amount of holy power. The man’s holy power was, in fact, comparable to an Athenian Envoy’s holy power. And...

*‘De... demon race...?!’*

My goodness! A foreigner had actually taken a member of the demon race under his command! This was an extremely extraordinary feat! That was right. Such an outstanding lord could not have asked Brod to raise livestock.

*‘He must have made an error. I’m sure he’s just exhausted from the long battle.’*

That was right. Brod convinced himself that Minhyuk was just exhausted. His exhaustion must have definitely made it hard for him to give him a task.

Then, Minhyuk started to introduce the people around him, “Ah. This man here is Grandpa Ben. He’s the territory’s barista. The coffee that he makes tastes absolutely divine.”

*'Wh... what?! You're telling me that he's the one in charge of making coffee in the territory?!'* Brod thought in shock.

Grandpa Ben looked at Brod kindly and said, "Hoho. Boy, I heard that you'll be the one in charge of the livestock? Let's have a cup of coffee some time. I've been researching squirrel luwak coffee and I assure you, the taste is excellent!"

*'Sq... squirrel luwak coffee?!'*

Then, Minhyuk introduced another one, "Ah, this man right here is our territory's bald heal... no, paladin, Sir Corr."

"Hello."

Brod could tell by the man's greeting that he was normal! But then, his next words almost caused Brod to faint.

"Hoo? I can see signs of baldness in your head. If you join our Talmor Religion, I will make sure to let your hair grow well! Fufufufu! Grow hair, grow!!!"

"..."

Was that the end? Of course not.

"This man from the demon race is the rare erotic author, Aruvel."

"Nice to meet you. So, you're the Mercenary King... I'm very curious, how hot your bed was while you traveled the entire continent? It must have squeaked strongly!!! How many beauties have you taken in your arms?!"

"..."

"Ah, this boy right here is Conir."

"Conir! Conir is good at cooking ramyeon! Conir is very happy to meet you! Brod should definitely eat at Conir's ramyeon store!"

"..."

That was the exact moment that Brod realized that Minhyuk did not make a mistake. That was right, Mercenary King Brod, the King of all the mercenaries in the continent and a Supreme NPC, was being tasked to take care of the livestock in the territory!

*'Your... Your Highness Iris... Please, please save me...'*

However, Iris, who was watching Brod from afar, thought when she saw his unchanging expression, *'He's still expressionless, but I'm sure he's very happy! Go, Brod! Write a new chapter in history with your new friends and colleagues!'*

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Minhyuk watched as Iris, who was riding on a white horse, approached him with the people of Rocard Kingdom.



Rocard Kingdom was clearly the smallest among all of the small countries. However, the main reason why they became a kingdom was because of their outstanding power and abilities. Of course, this power was like a small gust of wind against tens of thousands of undead, but the fact that they had outstanding powers and abilities remained unchanged.

If they chose to go out and show themselves to the world, there was no doubt that their finances would soar and surpass that of the other kingdoms. This was all thanks to their special power, crops and ingredients! They might be a small country, but the power and influence that they could exert could easily surpass an ordinary kingdom by more than twice, or even ten times! And the queen of this kingdom, Iris, personally appeared and stood in front of Minhyuk.

Then, Iris said, “Our Rocard Kingdom vows to engage in friendly relations with you and your territory.”

Her words were very shocking. The first one to suggest cooperation and friendly relations was Queen Iris! Of course, this made Minhyuk very happy. However, Iris was aware that Minhyuk was not a ‘king’ but a ‘lord’. A lord meant that he was a noble that belonged to a kingdom, or an empire.

“It seems like your qualifications are still not yet enough. So, I, and my Rocard Kingdom, will help you. However, I want you to help us too.”

Iris smiled softly as she looked at her people.

“We have secretly acquired a territory in the Northern Continent, and we want to build our new land and home there. After all, we have already lived a long time disconnected from the rest of civilization. We need protection and we want to entrust this to you. We will, of course, do our best to cooperate with you and comply with your requests. Although we’re saying that we want to create an alliance with you, the truth is we want to be under your umbrella and receive protection. So, in exchange for this protection, I will delegate to you a huge part of authority to our Rocard Kingdom.”

“...!”

Shock. Minhyuk was literally shocked! The words that she uttered were something that was beyond Minhyuk’s expectations. Then, the notifications began to ring.

[You have received 3,957 members of the Hybrid Race.]

[With Rocard Kingdom’s abilities to cultivate special crops, the cultivation rate of Atlas and Valhalla Territories will increase by 60%.]

[With Rocard Kingdom’s outstanding military force, the military force of Atlas and Valhalla Territories will increase by 40%.]

[You and Queen Iris will have a 5:5 ownership of the Ingredient Heaven.]

[You will now be able to grow special crops.]

[If you agree with Queen Iris’ proposal, you will be able to meet the requirements for building a kingdom.]

[You have met the required number of subjects.]

[Once your ally, the Rocard Kingdom, establishes a foothold in the Northern Continent, you will be able to annex some of their territories. With those territories on top of Atlas and Valhalla, you will be able to meet the territory requirement for building a kingdom.]

#### Chapter 405: Spotlight

Minhyuk was completely shocked. Although Iris said that this was an alliance, her words meant that she would put her trust in him, and follow him. He knew why she wanted to make such an arrangement with him.

*‘Iris wants to live a simple and peaceful life with her people.’*

Those that wanted to see the world would stay by Minhyuk’s side and receive his protection, while those that wanted to protect their Rocard Kingdom would stay with Iris and live in their new land and home. Although she said those words to declare their independence, the truth was Rocard Kingdom willingly went under Minhyuk’s command.

Minhyuk had yet to complete all of the requirements for becoming a king. This was because the territories under his command were still lacking. However, Iris had said that she would hand most of the authority over to Minhyuk once they had finished building their new land and home. By then, the Let’s Eat Sect would become the Let’s Eat Kingdom. However, the true reason that made Minhyuk thrilled was none other than...

*‘We have received the cultivation rights and can cultivate and grow special crops!’*

There was no doubt that Minhyuk and his territories would be able to gain a huge amount from this. After all, the value of the Hybrid Race’s crop cultivation rights was astronomical!

There was also the Ingredient Heaven. Minhyuk had also acquired the authority over the Ingredient Heaven. All of these combined had given Minhyuk the power of a kingdom. The only thing that he lacked was territory.

However, his work here was not yet done. Minhyuk’s gaze turned towards the main culprit of this disaster, who was standing helplessly at a distance.

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Death, the commander of Vormon’s Undead Corps that attacked Rocard Kingdom, was left in confusion. He wanted to escape and run away but he could not see a path out. That was when his anger flared up. He hated the happy and bright Food God. This was a man that lived a life that was a complete opposite of his. Death wanted to show all of the people that trampled and ignored him that he was also a great person.

The truth was Death had quite a villain-like back story. In reality, Death had a huge burn mark on his face. Because of this, he suffered severe bullying and humiliation ever since he was a child. And after he became an adult? He closed himself off and stayed in his house to play games. The only thing that he enjoyed was playing games. To top it off, he was very good at it.

So, even if it was just once, he wanted to gain the public’s recognition of his talents and achievements. Death wanted to gain the title of king! He wanted to be the very first person to gain this name and title, and show the world that he was a very amazing person.

However, this battle had crushed his dreams. The main reason was the 'penalty' from the quest that he received to plunder the Rocard Kingdom with Vormon's troops. The penalty was extremely heavy. It was all due to that man over there, the Food God, who took everything away from him, despite already receiving everyone's love. Death loathed this man.

Then, the Food God approached Death with a sword in hand and a fierce glare.

"Don't give me that damn look! What do you know, Food God?! Huh?! You're famous, kind, well-mannered, and a good person? Bullshit! You're just like those kids back then! Just like the ones that bullied me for having a huge burn on my face!"

Minhyuk looked at Death in confusion when he heard his words.

"Because they're stronger, they beat the shit out of a weakling like me while mocking me! They banged my head on the toilet until I cried all because I was weaker than them! But, you... you...! You live a life where everyone idolizes you?! Damn you! Damn all the bastards like you! How dare you bully the weak and torment them!"

Death did not know why he was spewing out all of this in front of this man. All he knew was that he was letting out the anger and helplessness that he had repressed and kept inside him for a very long time.

"Do you bastards know how I feel every day of my life?! It wasn't even my fault that I got a huge burn on my face!!! My parents died saving me from the fire but all I get is people calling me 'monster'!!! How dare you call me a monster!!!"

Death wept bitterly but for some reason, he felt relieved. His life had been saved by his parents, but the people around him called him a monster.

"I only stay at home and play games. I have not seen anyone for a long time. But you... you..." Death could not talk anymore and just continued to weep. He closed his eyes and waited for his death. He knew that he would only feel more miserable if he continued to say more.

But then, a soft and gentle voice tickled Death's ears. It was like a soft caress on Death's cheeks, "I see. You're living the precious life that your parents had saved, but people laughed and mocked you and gave you a hard time."

"...?"

Death slowly opened his eyes and saw the soft, yet bitter, smile gracing Minhyuk's lips. The man was smiling at him.

"Conir! Conir don't want you to blame yourself! Conir believes your life is precious!" Conir told Death.

"Hoho. What a bunch of bastards. Don't worry, I'll make a cup of coffee for you later."

"I'm sure your parents are very kind and wonderful people. Don't waste the life that they saved and treasure the life that they gave you."

Death looked around in confusion. What was going on? In fact, even Brod was left dumbfounded and confused by the sudden turn of events.

*‘What’s happening...? Are they showing pity to the enemy?!’*

Then, Minhyuk said, “Your life is very precious, it’s the life that your parents saved after all. So live it to the fullest. Don’t give up. I’m sure they’re looking down on you with pride. I understand what you feel. We’re not much different, you know? However, the fact that we’re two different people still stands. I think I know how you can gain happiness. Ten times. Just ten times. Come and visit me ten times and I will tell you how you can be happy.”

Death was moved. Minhyuk and his Named NPCs’ expressions were all sincere and kind. Death felt tears well up again in his eyes. For some reason, he had great expectations for this man. He asked, “Then, are you... are you... going to spare me?”

Death felt both grateful and happy as he continued to shed tears. Finally, someone understood him! The man in front of him had a very generous heart!

On the other hand, Brod felt suffocated. In the end, they were headed to the catastrophic ending that he dreaded!!! Were these people dreaming of building a kingdom when they were all driven by their emotions?!

But then, Minhyuk and his Named NPCs all tilted their heads in confusion.

“But we’re going to kill you, though?”

“We’re going to kill you.”

“Yep. It’s only natural for us to do that.”

“In a single strike too!”

“I’m Conir!!! Conir knows that’s one thing and this is another!!!”

Stab—

Minhyuk’s sword stabbed through Death’s neck. He did not show any mercy or hesitation. Minhyuk was not a fool. He would not keep him alive just because of sympathy.

“Keok. Give... give me back my feelings...”

Death slowly collapsed. But he still heard Minhyuk’s cold and frosty voice, “Even if we feel sympathy for you, the fact that you raided and tried to plunder this kingdom will not change.”

Then, Death finally died. Iris looked at the scene with a smile on her face as if she had expected this to happen. Yes. She knew that Minhyuk comforted him and gave him hope to live because he saw a great potential in the man.

*‘He could possibly do a lot of great things...’*

Before they could dig through his potential, the man still had to pay the price for his crimes. And Minhyuk also told him, *‘Treasure your life.’*

If he treasured his life, then they could possibly coexist and live together. Iris was very impressed with how Minhyuk handled this situation.

*'He's very intelligent.'*

Even though they were enemies, he knew that people with such backstories could change. However, he was also a cold and decisive man. Iris could tell that Minhyuk would be a wise ruler.

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[You have failed the Quest: Plunder Rocard Kingdom.]

[As a penalty, you will lose a significant number of ownership on your undead summons.]

[All of your stats will be reduced by 5%.]

This was a huge penalty for Death! The penalty for the quest: Plunder Rocard Kingdom was as big as the rewards that he could get.

Jung Ji-Hoon went out of the capsule. His face looked a bit grotesque because of the huge burn mark that covered the right side of his face. However, his tall stature that reached 182 cm, as well as his fair and white skin, could make him stand out from the crowd. On top of that, the left side of his face was very handsome.

Despite the huge penalty, Jung Ji-Hoon felt something different from disappointment and frustration. He thought, *'If I go to him ten times, then he'll tell me how I can be happy...?'*

Death, or Jung Ji-Hoon, asked himself: *'Am I happy? Do I smile everyday? Do I want to continue living this lonely life in this cold, dark, and gloomy curtained room?'*

The answer was no. Not at all. He also wanted to gain happiness, but then anger came over him.

*'What does a man like him, who has everything in the world, know?!'*

The Food God was very handsome. His face was enough to surpass any of the actors or actresses that he had seen. He was also the leader of a guild. Everyone looked up to him and his leadership despite still being young. He was someone that lived a completely different life than him. Jung Ji-Hoon believed that such a man could never understand him. But...

*'I'm very curious...!'*

.

He wanted to know the way to be happy!

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With the completion of all of the quests related to Rocard Kingdom, the members of Let's Eat Sect were allowed to enter the kingdom. Genie and the members of Let's Eat Sect heard about what they did in the kingdom, and what Minhyuk had received, including the thousands of members of the Hybrid Race and Mercenary King Brod. He even received ownership of the Ingredient Heaven, the place where they could get incredible ingredients.

All in all, Minhyuk, Ali, and the vassals truly did a great job.

Suddenly, the members of Let's Eat Sect turned to Brod and bowed deeply.

"Thank you! Thank you very much! Thank you for being normal!"

“Sir Brod, you don’t have any interest in luwak coffee, baldness, ramyeon and erotic novels, right?!”

Brod felt emotional when he heard the words of Minhyuk’s guild members!

“You... you guys are normal too?!!!”

“Yes! We’re also normal!!!”

“Thank you!!! Thank you for being normal!!!”

The scene unfolding in front of them was very strange and shocking. However, Locke, who was very pleased about this situation, looked the most abnormal among them.

Then, Genie asked, “Ah, by any chance, Brod... did you already receive a task from Minhyuk?”

“He told me to be in charge of the livestock.”

As soon as they heard his answer, the guild members could already tell what would happen in the future.

*‘Ah, Brod will also...’*

*‘He’ll eventually get Minhyuk-ified.’*

*‘Sob!’*

The gazes that the members of the Let’s Eat Sect used to look at Brod was filled with sympathy. Brod did not know it yet, but he will eventually get Minhyuk-ified and live a very happy life, one that was far happier than his life before.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk and Genie were discussing something.

“Death?”

“Yeah. Do you know him?”

“I know. He’s an unofficial ranker, but he rarely makes an appearance. And since only a few had seen him, there are only a few discussions about him. However, he’s well-known as the leader of Korea’s one-man legion. The story about him leading thousands of undead troops alone was so unrealistic that I thought it was just some kind of made-up story created by the public...”

After hearing about Death from Genie, Minhyuk realized that the man was more amazing than what he thought. Even though he was still unknown to the general player population, there were a few rankers that heard about his feats.

“Death’s very powerful. I can tell that he’s on par with the Summit Five. Of course, it was all thanks to the undead that he summoned, but that’s also his own power.”

Minhyuk had clearly felt the power from Death’s undead legion. Even though he used Vormon’s Undead Corps, his own undead could also clearly exert tremendous power. If Minhyuk did not have

the 'Continent Destroyer Sword' and his special abilities, then he would have fought a very difficult battle earlier.

"But to ask him to come ten times to you... Do you think he'll come?" Genie asked in doubt.

Minhyuk could only smile bitterly in answer. He had given Death a chance, but he did not really have much of an expectation that he would come.

"I don't think it makes sense. No player would come to you ten times just because of something like that. Besides, Death is a player that has always kept to himself..."

But before her words could finish...

"Minhyuk, there's a strange person that came to find you?"

"...?"

"...?"

Minhyuk and Genie both tilted their heads in confusion after hearing the words that Locke said. Then, the man, Death, was left standing in front of Minhyuk, inside Rocard Kingdom's audience hall as Genie and Locke went out. However, the people of Rocard Kingdom glared at him as if they wanted to kill him.

"Food God! Tell me! How can I be happy! If you lie, I will make your life a living hell!"

*'So, he's curious.'*

Minhyuk grinned and said, "This is the first. You still have nine more to go."

Then, Minhyuk nodded at the people of Rocard Kingdom, who immediately rushed forward and attacked Death.

"Keok! Why, why are you letting them attack me when you told me to find you?! Don't gang up on me! I'll, I'll summon my undead! Keok?! N... not there! Keuaaaaack! It... it exploded...?!"

That was right. Minhyuk had told him to come to him ten times. Finding him ten times meant that Death would experience death ten times too. This was because he committed an unforgivable crime against the people of Rocard Kingdom.

However, Death knew that he would not be able to find the answer to his question if he summoned the undead and fought against the people of Rocard Kingdom.

This marked the beginning of Death's visits to Minhyuk. And this was where the legend about Death, the King of Death that would lead millions of undead troops in the future, and Food God Minhyuk started.

Chapter 406: Spotlight

Death, or Jung Ji-Hoon, went out of the capsule with a satisfied smile on his face. He said, "I'm glad I died a less painful death today!"

It was not the usual gang beating, but a swift and easy twisting of his neck. As of today, Jung Ji-Hoon had already made five visits. Death's first two visits were made in quick succession but after that he decided to take some breaks in between.

This was because of what Minhyuk had told him on his second visit. He said, *'I'll give you a hint every time you die. Ah, Do you have any problem with dying every time? If you have, then you don't have to come. It's totally up to you.'*

That was right. Death continued to visit and die, despite the high penalties. But he also wondered...

*'How come?'*

Why was he showing mercy to him? Minhyuk was supposed to kill him, so why was he showing mercy to him? It was simple. Death wanted to stay with Minhyuk but he was Rocard Kingdom's enemy. It was only right for him to die every time under the hands of the people of Rocard Kingdom. However, even after killing him time and again, the people's resentment did not decrease. After all, they had lost their family and precious people.

Throb—

It has been a long time since he last felt his heart ache. Death thought that he lost all of his emotions. However, the more he went to find Minhyuk, the more he felt his emotions come back.

*'Although it's just a game, what I did was no different from what those people did to me.'*

He trampled, mocked, and tried to plunder their resources with force. Although they might be NPCs...

*'It's also like a world to me...'*

Just like how he lost his parents, he also took away their precious families. After finding the first hint, Death still continued to welcome his death there.

*'Even if they kill me a hundred or a thousand times, their resentment towards me will never disappear.'*

This was the result of what he did. Besides, he was doing this to gain enlightenment and find a way to be happy. And today, two weeks before the start of *Athenae: World War*, Death came to die for the seventh time.

"Argh! Urk! Aack! Heok?! Keheok! N, not, not there!"

Spurt—

He did not know how many times that part had exploded! However, the anger and wrath of the people of Rocard Kingdom did not subside, despite the fact that they had killed him many times, and continued to trample on him.

"I understand. I've committed a great sin."

However, even if he realized that, it did not mean that they would forgive him. This was a burden that he had to carry for the rest of his life. As Death welcomed his death again after being beaten badly by the people, he sent a whisper to Minhyuk.



Not long after, an answer came back.

The end of Minhyuk's words made Death flare up in anger, *'What the hell?! Are you telling me that I'm not even worth your whispers?! Huh?!'*

Death wondered furiously what Minhyuk was trying to get at, when he had not even given him the exact answer that he wanted. His head was completely filled with anger!

[Minhyuk has blocked you.]

"...!"

Death's anger flared up again, and he vowed to never return and die at the hands of the Rocard Kingdom again. For a moment, he believed that Minhyuk's words about them being similar and him telling about how to be happy were all lies.

*'How can this trashy life of mine be worth something?!'*

In the first place, he believed was born as a pathetic trash.

Then, the next day, Death still went back to Rocard Kingdom.

"Bastard! You're here again?! Good. I was just thinking about more painful ways to kill you."

"You damn bastard! Why do you come here everyday?!"

"Die!!!"

Death, just like usual, was stoned and beaten to death by hundreds of people from the Rocard Kingdom. But even though he was just being cursed at and spat on by the people inside the game, Death's mind and spirit, which had long been corrupted and rotten by the criticisms that the world had thrown at him, was slowly changing for the better.

*'I'm sorry. I acted just like the people that I hated. I plundered and took away those precious to you.'*

And just like that, he died again. After logging out, Death could only stare blankly into space with a bitter smile on his face. In the end, he would still go back tomorrow. He sighed deeply before going on the internet and ordering his food for tomorrow. But what he saw made him stop in his tracks.

*'What...?what?the hell is this?'*Death thought in shock.

Both the local and global community sites were boiling. The number one real time search word was 'Food God' while the second search word was 'eating addiction'. Death read the various articles that appeared on his screen the moment he clicked on the topic of discussion.

[Food God Minhyuk and Eating Addiction. What kind of rare disease was he afflicted with?]

[It's a rare disease where one cannot stop eating for the rest of their lives. A disease with a survival rate of less than 1%.]

[It is a terrible disease that has shocked the global medical community.]

[Who was the informant that tipped about the Food God to Despatch?]

[Food God Minhyuk has filed a complaint and will be taking tough actions against the informant.]

[A huge and fat man of 170kg, this is the man called Food God.]

Death's eyes widened in shock.

*'A rare disease? A mysterious informant?'*

Someone mysteriously informed the media about Minhyuk's disease during this precarious time leading to the *Athenae*: World War, especially when the entire world was paying attention to him.

In a way, it was quite amazing that this news leaked at this point in time. After all, it was a secret that Minhyuk had guarded for a very long time. News travels as fast as the wind, so it was very surprising that it had not been leaked all this while. Minhyuk also declared that he would be taking tough actions against the informant.

The worst part was the fact that a picture was also attached to the article, showing Minhyuk and his huge, 170kg body. His figure looked horrible. The shape of his face could not even be seen from the flesh that hung all over his body. Even his legs were larger than a normal person's waist. There were a flood of comments under the photo.

[This is the handsome Food God? Uweeeck!!!]

[Woah. What the hell is this? This is the Food God?]

[OMG. That's shocking... I was originally his fan but I'm going to stop now!!!]

[I'm so shocked. I can't believe that I liked a person like this. I'm going to leave his fan cafe now.]

[As expected. God is fair. Hahahahahahaha. Bastard piggy!]

Death's eyes widened even further after seeing the comments.

*'He said that he was similar to me, right...?'*

Death finally realized why Minyuk said that. No, perhaps Minhyuk lived a far more difficult life than him. After all, this was a paragraph taken out of a transcript written by a world-renowned doctor:

[Living feels more painful than experiencing death. From the time they open their eyes in the morning, until they close their eyes to sleep, they would feel extreme hunger. It would feel like they're living in hell. The Food God is living a hellish life.]

Many had expressed their sympathy towards him. However, the curses were still rampant. This was how people were. Most hated seeing someone else live a good life, and once they grabbed a hold of their weakness, they would curse them vehemently.

*'He's similar to me but he's living a different life from me...'*

It seemed that Minhyuk was living a life like that. But in *Athenae*, Minhyuk was able to overcome his hell and live a good life. Tears dripped down Death's cheeks as he thought, '*Someone intentionally let out the news!*'

Jung Ji-Hoon's anger flared up again. What he hated the most was seeing people mocking others' pain. He quickly grabbed his mobile phone and used his *Athenae* ID to send a whisper to Minhyuk. He was still unable to access the game because of the death penalty, so all he could do was use his phone.

[Minhyuk is currently logged out.]

"...?!"

Death sighed. Minhyuk must have been devastated. But then, at that moment, he received a letter from *Athenae* on his mobile phone. If one was logged in *Athenae*, the letter would be delivered via pigeon.

[You have received a letter sent by Minhyuk.]

*Athenae's* letter function was very accurate and flexible. One could, in fact, schedule a letter to be sent later. That was when Death remembered the words that Minhyuk said a few days ago. '*You will continue to die here today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and the day after that.*'

[I'm suffering from a rare and unimaginable disease. However, there's a reason why I have overcome it.]

The letter ended at that. Then, it disappeared by itself.

[This letter will immediately disappear after you read it.]

It was set like this so that Death would not be able to say it to anyone. And even if he let out the news and used the letter as reference, his voice would eventually be buried without any evidence on hand. Death felt his heart clench in pain when he saw the letter.

And just like that, the day before the *Athenae*: World War finally came.

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The very first World War was of course held in Korea. The global rankers arrived, one after the other, on private planes loaned to them by their own countries, before heading straight towards the huge stadium where the World War would take place. They went there a day earlier to take pictures and strengthen their resolve. Meanwhile, the cameras were broadcasting live and showing the figures of their own rankers.

[The Korean players are entering!]

[Mage Ali, Blacksmith Hyemin'sDaddy, Emperor of the Sword Carr, Knight of Agony Alicia, and Jefreet's Descendant Locke! The Korean players are entering one after the other!]

[We can see how tense the Korean players are even through the broadcasting camera.]

[However, they're one person short. We don't see the Food God. Not too long ago, news about the Food God and his eating addiction, a rare disease, had spread not only in Korea, but all over the world.]

[It's a shame but I will keep on rooting for Player Minhyuk and his complete recovery.]

[It's alright even if he doesn't show up. He will always remain as our nation's 'hero'.]

One of the commentators, Jan, was stunned when she heard the word hero.

*'Minhyuk...'*

Jan had the chance to get acquainted with him before, so she was a little bitter when she heard his sad story. Well, everyone was thinking the same thing. They all knew that he would not show up. With his heavy and huge build at 173kg, he would definitely not come. Yeah, it was better for him to not show up. After all, the world would just laugh and mock him.

*'I'm rooting for you. Please make it happen!'*

She hoped that Minhyuk could recover from his disease completely. Right now, all that was left for the commentators to do was simple, and that was to meet the other Korean representatives heroes.

"Mr. Locke, give us a few words! Did you hear anything from Food God Minhyuk?"

"Mr. Khan, when was the last time you've seen Mr. Minhyuk? Did you know about his eating addiction?"

"We refuse to answer those questions."

All of the players from South Korea refused to answer the reporters' questions. Meanwhile, Mage Ali looked at the seat next to him. This was the seat where Minhyuk was supposed to be.

*'Is that why he did not confirm his participation?'*

Perhaps that was the reason why he was a bit reluctant to participate in the World War.

Meanwhile, on the community sites...

[I guess the Food God ran away? What? Is he trying to lose weight?]

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[Trashy Korea is now without any hope.]

[Stop that. Who would want to be like that? No one. Why are you criticizing him so harshly but you did not praise him when he was doing well? You're all bastards.]

[Why isn't he showing up?! Are we just going to give up on the World War just like that?!]

[Hey, if it were you, would you be willing to show up with a body like that?]

Their opinions were divided. On the other hand, the players from all over the world felt a bit relieved. Simply because...

*'The most dangerous guy is gone.'*

After all, there was nobody who would not be delighted if the greatest threat disappeared by themselves. Among the hundreds of players gathered together, darkness seemed to shroud the heads of all of the Korean players.

Meanwhile, the Japanese player, Kentaro, thought, *'You're not coming?'*

Kentaro chuckled bitterly as he stood still amidst the countless cameras that were focused on him.

*‘However, what I think about you won’t change. I still think that you’re the best.’*

Just when Kentaro was going to let out another bitter laugh, a sudden disturbance occurred on the side where the Korean players were.

“What?! He came?!”

“What did you say?!”

“He’s coming?!”

“He’s already here?!”

Kentaro’s eyes widened.

*‘Who’s coming? The Food God?’*

The commotion grew louder while dozens of cameras turned to focus on the entrance where the vehicles stop at. Just then, a slick limousine, a limited edition sold only to the 50 richest people in the world by Benza, stopped together with several black SUVs. Then, dozens of handsome and strong-looking bodyguards quickly got off the SUVs and lined up on either side of the limousine, as a man slowly opened the door. Exclamations burst out from the mouths of the people that watched the scene.

“Waaaaaaaaah!”

Click, click, click, click, click, click—

Hundreds of cameras clicked away to capture the man’s face, while plenty of women screamed unknowingly. Someone even looked like they were going to faint after making eye contact with the man. Kentaro could not see what was happening due to the crowd. The guards lined up and created a path for the man.

No, to be exact, the crowd unknowingly paved a way for the man.

Clack, clack, clack, clack, clack—

The click of the man’s heels rang loudly in the area amidst the silence.

Clack, clack, clack—

The hundreds of cameras and thousands of people all watched the man in silent awe.

Clack, clack, clack, clack—

The representatives from all over the world turned to look at them in doubt. That was when Kentaro finally saw the man.

The man’s bangs were perfectly brushed up, showcasing his thick and smooth eyebrows, sparkling eyes, straight nose, sharp jawline, and small face. He was around 185 cm tall, with legs long enough that could rival that of a model. Even his shoulders were wide and strong.

Everything seemed to have been set in slow motion as the man continued to walk. Kentaro and the rest of the people looking at the man felt their breath stop.

Clack, clack, clack, clack—

The click of the man's heels continued to ring loudly, overwhelming the entire crowd. The man, wearing a black suit, walked with one hand on his pocket and a gentle smile on his face. His looks were comparable... no, his looks surpassed even that of an actor. The man's gorgeous looks were enough to incur any man's jealousy and steal any woman's heart.

The mysterious man continued to walk until he stood in front of the photo zone. His gait and gaze remained natural as he stood in front of thousands of cameras.

"Crazy..."

"My goodness... That man's really handsome..."

"I've never seen such a handsome Asian before..."

The man, with his hand still in his pocket, looked at the audience confidently, while the representatives from all over the world looked at him in surprise.

"What the hell? He's so handsome."

"Can a person really look that gorgeous?"

"He looks like his looks have been carved in stone."

"It seems like South Korea has already won a gold in terms of appearances."

The man stood in front of thousands of flashing camera lights and said, "Food God Minhyuk. Participating in *Athenae: World War*."

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

Murmur, murmur.

Click, click, click, click, click, click—

His gorgeous appearance, striking proportions, and gentle voice left everyone and the entire world astonished. Minhyuk, standing at 185cm and weighing 77kg, had made his appearance!

## Chapter 407: Spotlight

Two weeks ago.

Minhyuk went with the farmers of Rocard Kingdom to the Ingredient Heaven. When they arrived at the Ingredient Heaven, he was surprised to find the field shining brightly. It was both a strange and shocking sight. On top of that, all of the ingredients planted in the Ingredient Heaven were auxiliary cooking ingredients, like garlic, spring onions, onions, carrots, and the like.

Minhyuk harvested one onion and checked the ingredient's information.

"Heok...?!" Minhyuk gasped in shock.

The size of Ingredient Heaven was larger than what he initially expected it to be. The ingredients that they could harvest right away looked to be in the thousands. And those thousands of ingredients had an effect that could permanently increase one's stats.

However, the *Athenae* management were definitely not stupid. They had set a limit and only allowed each person to eat ten of each ingredient to maintain balance. However, there were no limits imposed on how many kinds of restricted ingredients one could eat. One could increase their stats by 50 just by eating onions, garlic, spring onions, and carrots alone.

This was also another reason why Minhyuk was so shocked...

*'The ingredients in Ingredient Heaven can rival an elixir?'*

Elixirs were regular occurrences in RPG games. They were extremely expensive potions that could raise one's stats by +1 or +2 upon consumption. However, elixirs were very difficult to obtain. Assuming that one obtained STR elixirs by luck, they could only take five. Any more after that and it would not work anymore.

This was the main reason why medicines were extremely valuable. However, even after one had taken those elixirs, they could still eat the ingredients from Ingredient Heaven.

After searching through and looking through the details of Ingredient Heaven, Minhyuk found another surprising thing...

[You can always harvest at least 500 crops every year in the Ingredient Heaven.]

This amount of crops would never change even if they had a bad harvest. So, what would happen if there was a good bumper? This meant that the number of crops that they could harvest would increase.

Haze, who went with Minhyuk, looked at the Ingredient Heaven in admiration. She said, "Our troops will be able to grow further and get stronger with this. And, if we find a way to plant and harvest more crops in this Ingredient Heaven, then..."

The value of this place was astronomical. With this in hand, they would be able to strengthen their Atlas Territory troops and solve their financial problems. However, this was only assuming that they found out how to plant these crops. In fact, even the farmers of Rocard Kingdom did not know how to cultivate crops in the Ingredient Heaven.

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According to them, the crops in this place grew on their own. And since the crops were heavily influenced by nature, they could not determine if they would have a good or bad harvest until the time to harvest came. As long as they found a way to cultivate crops in this land, they would be able to utilize it better, which in turn would help them leap to a higher place.

They had to try everything that they could find, whether it was information from an old book, legendary soils, fertilizers, or nutritional supplements. Minhyuk and the members of Let's Eat Sect gave their all in preparation for the upcoming *Athenae*: World War.

Then, a piece of news stood out in the guild chat window.

: Death came again. He's still asking: 'What's the way to be happy?!']

Minhyuk smiled. Death had already come here to find him several times. However, he never intended to show him mercy and stop the people from killing him. But after a while, a whisper came from Death.

Minhyuk smiled bitterly. He fully understood what Death was feeling. That was right. Minhyuk lived a life similar to Death. He hid in the dark for the longest time possible and lived a difficult life, one that he did not choose. Then, Minhyuk sent a whisper to Death...

...and cut him off.

[You have blocked Death.]

Even if Minhyuk blocked him, he knew that Death would continue to come here and die. Minhyuk went to the general goods' store and bought letters. He would send these letters starting from Death's sixth death until his last death under the hands of the people of Rocard Kingdom.

Minhyuk wrote him letters and used the 'schedule function' to send the letters to Death. His first letter was:

[I'm suffering from a rare and unimaginable disease. However, there's a reason why I have overcome it.]

Including that letter, Minhyuk wrote a total of five letters that he sent on a schedule. He stretched his body and thought, '*Will I be able to change his life?*'

Minhyuk was not sure either. After all, he did not really do much for Death. He just told Death to come to him ten times and die, while he wrote a few letters. However, Minhyuk knew that this small act of kindness will become a driving force for a desperate person to rise up and live a new life. Of course, he just showed Death a bit of mercy, but Minhyuk predicted that he would be able to bring Death to his side with this small act.

And just when Minhyuk was about to move...

"Hmm?"



Minhyuk looked at the whisper in doubt. But when he logged out, the news left him struck dumb. He felt as if he had been hit hard on the head. The first in the real-time search words was Food God and the second was eating addiction. This meant that someone had tipped Despatch about him.

The entire mansion was shrouded with a tense atmosphere. Even Minhyuk himself looked solemn after knowing that the thing that they hid for a long time ended up suddenly being revealed to the world without their consent. However, in a way, one could say that they had already hidden it very well. After all, Kang Minhyuk was Chairman Kang Minhoo's son!

Minhyuk strived hard to achieve excellence in everything that he did. He was Ilhwa Group's most promising star, their next chairman. That was why he usually drew attention from the public. However, he suddenly disappeared.

"This is clearly a scheme done by a rival company!" Oh Changwook shouted in anger.

Minhyuk's father also rushed back to the house the moment he heard the news, "Son!"

His father looked extremely worried. He was not even worried about his company, all he was worried about was how his son was faring. Minhoo was very worried about the backlash that his son would receive. What would his son feel if the world sneered and mocked him?

Everyone looked at the dazed Minhyuk worriedly. After a few minutes, Minhyuk slowly stood up from his seat and went to the weighing scale.

[89.5kg]

Ever since he measured his weight back then, Minhyuk did his part and steadily lost weight. And right now, he has already reached a normal weight. In fact, he was not at all flustered. He seemed to be in a daze, because he was calmly assessing the situation.

Oh Changwook and Lee Jinhwan looked at Minhyuk in admiration.

*'My goodness... It's amazing. How can he be so calm in front of this situation?'*

*'As expected of the Chairman's son, right...?'*

They knew that they would have already fallen into despair if they were in Minhyuk's shoes right now. Then, Minhyuk opened his mouth and said, "It's okay for the world to know."

"Huh?"

"What?"

Everyone around him looked at him in confusion when they heard his words. Minhyuk looked at his father, Oh Changwook, Lee Jinhwan, Hye-jin, and the rest of the people that were worried about him and said, "It's because I survived and overcame this disease."

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

That was right. He could proudly say that he had created a miracle. World-renowned doctors were discussing the disease called eating addiction and had declared that it was an incurable disease, an unprecedented disease that had no successful treatment, and would eventually kill the patient. Plenty of people mocked and laughed at Minhyuk's misfortune. However, what they did not know was that Minhyuk overcame it.

"We can use this to reverse the situation," Minhyuk said with a grin.

Turning a disaster into an opportunity. An idiom that meant changing one's crisis into a blessing and opportunity. Minhyuk thought about it calmly. Everyone would curse at him and mock him for being fat. They would also think that he would not participate in the World War because of how he looked.

Everyone was assuming that he was over 200 kg in weight right now. This meant that the person that tipped Despatch knew him before he started playing *Athenae*. The informant was most likely someone that worked in the mansion in the past.

Minhyuk had overcome this eating addiction, a disease that no one could fight against. He stood in front of the mirror and looked at himself. He still had to lose around 10 kg, but he thought that he looked great already.

What would happen if he lost another 10 kg and appeared in public? And with his life story, how would the people feel if they knew that his sad and desperate drama had actually turned into a success story?

The people would definitely go wild and look up to the Food God that had overcome a deadly disease who appeared in front of the world with a handsome and outstanding appearance!

*'Perhaps, I should thank the informant instead?'*

Minhyuk did not know who he was, but he gave the tip-off at the perfect time. They intended to use it to abuse Minhyuk, but he would use it as an 'opportunity'. Even the companies that targeted Ilhwa Group would fall into frustration and despair once they saw his success story.

However, there was a problem. With the upcoming World War, he did not have much time to lose 10 kg. He only had a little over two weeks left to lose that much weight.

"Will you be alright with that, Minhyuk?" Lee Jinhwan asked worriedly.

The drug k4-1 was a drug specially manufactured for Minhyuk by Ilhwa Pharmaceuticals, a pharmaceutical company under the Ilhwa Group. It had been a month since the drug was developed successfully.

However, this drug could not be taken for more than three weeks. Besides, it was not an effective drug against eating addiction. But with Minhyuk's surprising weight loss, amazing improvement, and tenacious wil, Jinhwan had judged that this drug would work for him. He was just reluctant to recommend it because of the side effects.

“It’s going to be alright. I only have two weeks left to work with. I have to give the people that are cursing and mocking me during this two-week duration a surprise and turn the situation around,” Minhyuk said.

Changwook grinned and said, “What are you saying? It’s not ‘I’, it’s ‘we’.”

Changwook’s words warmed Minhyuk’s heart. Meanwhile, Kang Minhoo watched the scene in shock. He thought, ‘*My son has truly grown up.*’

Minhyuk’s ability to read the entire situation and come up with a solution could already rival his own. Even his plan to use this disaster and turn it into an opportunity was very shocking.

And just like that, two weeks had gone by.

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“Food God Minhyuk. Participating in *Athenae: World War*.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Murmur, murmur.

Click, click, click, click, click, click—

Everyone in the audience was shocked. The figure that they saw in the pictures had completely disappeared. They could not recognize Minhyuk, despite him looking exactly like how he looked in *Athenae*. This was because they were in denial. After all, was there really a person that could really lose that much weight and come back to this level?

On top of that, Minhyuk also looked different from his character in *Athenae*.?First off, the armor in *Athenae*?and modern suits and clothes were completely different. Besides, Minhyuk’s face was also prepared and had make up.

Meanwhile, the commentators...

[This is completely unbelievable. Minhyuk, the player that has created miracle after miracle in *Athenae*, has appeared in front of us. His appearance alone could surprise and overwhelm the representatives from other countries!!!]

[My heart is filled with indescribable emotions! It must have been a hard fight against that disease! However, Player Minhyuk had fought fiercely and won against this unwanted and incurable disease! My tears keep on flowing!!!]

[This is something that could bring a huge shock to the global medical community!!!]

[I don’t know what to say. All I could say is that he looks handsome and cool!!!]

It was the truth. Everyone that looked at Minhyuk, whether they be the reporters, the national representatives, or the general population, everyone held their breaths in awe.

And Go Eun-ah, the reporter acquainted with ‘Ruwan’, stood among the other reporters. She was a reporter that had written several articles about Ilhwa Group. She had been scouted and hired by Park Munsoo to write articles for them. Go Eun-ah smiled as she started to write an article on the spot.

Food God Minhyuk. No, Minhyuk, who was afflicted with Eating Addiction, has overcome his disease and proudly appears in front of the world. This is his ‘success story’.

She was sure that his story would bring countless tears to the eyes of everyone in the world and would give hope to those suffering from rare and unknown diseases.

Everyone’s taunts and ridicule had turned into cheers and shouts of envy. Minhyuk had completely turned the tide in his favor.

#### Chapter 408: Penalty Shoot-Out

Click, click, click, click, click, click!

The hundreds of cameras present in the venue were still filming and taking pictures of the South Korean representatives. On this day, the eve of the start of the competition, the Korean representatives received the most attention among all of the representatives.

“And lastly, may we all ask the representatives to gather together on stage to take pictures?”

Minhyuk suddenly interjected after hearing the reporter’s request, “Ah. Wait a moment. There’s still one more person coming.”

“Huh?”

The reporters looked at Minhyuk in doubt. All of the publicly declared representatives were already gathered. However, when they looked at it closely, they realized that there was still one more seat without a player.

“What? Who’s going to come?” Locke, or Jisoo, expressed his doubts. But then...

Murmur, murmur—

Another commotion started as a man, wearing a white mask that covered half of his face, walked out from the crowd. Minhyuk smiled happily when he saw the man appear. The man slowly approached Minhyuk and reached his hand out for a handshake, a gesture that Minhyuk gladly accepted. This man was none other than Death. It was ‘Jung Ji-Hoon’.

Jung Ji-Hoon had originally received the *Athenae*’s management’s invitation to participate in the World War since he met the requirements for the quota. This was the quota wherein each country could send out two people to participate in the games, even if they did not receive the MVP title.

.

However, despite their invitation and persuasion, Death maintained radio silence. He did not have any intention to participate at all. But after receiving Minhyuk’s letter, Death eventually changed his mind. Minhyuk’s letter wrote:

[I’m suffering from a rare and unimaginable disease. However, there’s a reason why I have overcome it.]

[Because there are people that lead me to a path that has given me hope.]

[You and I are no different from each other. The only difference between us are the people that surround us. You might have lacked good people around you, something that I have plenty of.]

Jung Ji-Hoon looked at the letters incredulously. Was this man mocking him? There were no people around him? But, at the end of Minhyuk's letter...

[If you don't mind, I wish to be one of the good people around you.]

Those words touched Death deeply. He continued to receive these letters even after Minhyuk's eating addiction had been released to the world for the picking. This made Minhyuk's words ring louder and resonate stronger with him. That was when Death made his decision. He willingly went to join Minhyuk in *Athenae: World War*.

Jung Ji-Hoon stood beside him in the photo zone as the reporters began to take their pictures. But despite that, everyone was in doubt and confusion.

[The player with the nickname 'Death' is an unknown player.]

[He's wearing a white mask to cover the huge burn mark that covered half of his face.]

[I wonder if this unknown and hidden player that South Korea had chosen will perform well?]

[If he can become a variable and a stumbling block to the other countries, then he might be able to help us secure a medal.]

Just like that, everyone ushered in the first day of the *Athenae: World War*.

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[Ladies and gentlemen, your most awaited *Athenae: World War* has now begun!!!]

Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

This was the first ever *Athenae: World War* to be hosted. There were a total of 50 countries participating, with around 15 known and popular events. And with the inclusion of the unpopular events, the total number of events were quite a lot. Of course, the events were divided between team and individual events. Everyone was looking forward to watching these events.

The stadium that they were using for the World War was the stadium that they used during the Pyeongchang Olympics in the past and could accommodate 40,000 people. This just went to show how much and how long the Korean Government and Joy Co. Ltd. had been preparing together.

The most awaited first event was an event made by transforming and changing the sport 'soccer', a sport that everyone from all over the world was very enthusiastic about. This event was none other than the 'Penalty Shoot-Out'. The commentators started to explain the game.

[I think it's safe to say that the Penalty Shoot-Out is the 'Athenae Sports' soccer event.]

[They took inspiration from soccer but they have a completely different way of playing it. In fact, the game will have thousands of balls and hundreds of goal posts. And these goal posts can also move quickly and freely.]

[According to what I've heard, it's almost impossible to make a goal with these balls if one isn't a real ranker.]

[I believe it's because the goal posts have a will of their own and can quickly move and change places to avoid or block the balls coming their way. What's more, the balls will only move if they 'reach a certain amount of damage' or if they accurately hit a small red dot in the ball. If that red dot is accurately hit, they don't need to worry about the damage, the ball will move normally.]

[Even monsters that are well-known for their power can't move the ball with their normal power.]

[There's also a special golden ball among the thousands of balls. It appears erratically but they can score 15 points as long as they slam it in the goal post. However, the golden ball has a will of its own and is much heavier than the other balls. On top of that, it can only be moved by reaching a certain damage.]

[And they also can't control the trajectory of the ball unless they use their magic and skills. However, scoring a golden ball will ultimately allow them to gain a huge leap in scores.]

[Three people per country can participate in this event.]

[There are many familiar faces from Korea's side that will participate in the first event. Food God Minhyuk, Mage Ali, and Root. However, their situation is a bit worrying. Mage Ali was said to have fallen back to Level 1. It's already a foregone conclusion and it makes you wonder why he still participated.]

[Perhaps it's because they want to fill in the numbers. However, I believe Korea's decision to add him to the roster is very foolish.]

[There's also Root. He's a player called Master Archer and a very promising player for the World Olympics. However, he retired due to some accident.]

[But the balls will only move after receiving a 'certain amount of damage' and the damage that a bow can incur is very small. It's also a weapon that requires a high amount of concentration and accuracy. This is the reason why all of the countries, except Korea, have added an archer to their roster.]

[Let's look at Player Minhyuk, Korea's Penalty Shoot-Out captain and the highest contributor in Vormon's hunt. Plenty of comments from people all over the world ignore his capabilities while plenty also say that he's comparable to the Summit Five. However, there's one thing that we're sure of, everyone expects him to play very well in this Penalty Shoot-Out.]

In the South Korean players' waiting room.

"Hooooo!" Ali, or Yoon Ji-Hoo, let out a shaky breath. He felt very grateful to Minhyuk and the Let's Eat Sect.

"Uwoo, uwooo!"

"What's this? Huh? Are you drawing something for me?"

Yoon Ji-Seok, Ali's hyung, was staying with them in the waiting room. He really wanted his hyung to be present in the stadium and watch him on that stage. After all, this was something that his Yoon Ji-Seok hyung had told him time and again before. He told him that he wanted to personally watch him on that stage, playing in a competition. And everyone from Let's Eat Sect was looking after his brother fondly and with kindness.

*'As expected, my vision and judgment for people are very good.'*

Then, Minhyuk beckoned to Ali, "Ali, come and look at this!"

In the past, Yoon Ji-Seok was a fine arts major and right now, he was drawing something on the national representatives' wrist where their friendship token was originally drawn on. In other words, he was drawing some kind of friendship token on the wrists of all the people present in the room.

Ali looked at them in doubt, as Root and Minhyuk held out their arms only for him to see a Korean flag drawn on both of their wrists. Ali smiled as he watched his hyung finish the Korean flag on his own wrist.

“Frieeeeeeeeend!”

“Frieeeeeeeeend!”

“Frieeeeeeeeend!”

The three of them all reached their arms out to place the flags together before shouting loudly. The other representatives were shocked by their sudden outburst but they did not really care that much.

And finally, the first game, the Penalty Shoot-Out, started. The representatives of each participating country warped one after the other inside the stadium. The same was true for Minhyuk, Ali, and Root.

The area where the game was going to be held was a huge plain. The scale of this event was beyond anyone's imagination, even with hundreds of rankers running around, the place did not even feel cramped.

There were also dozens of goal posts, a third of the size of an ordinary soccer goal post, whizzing over the players' heads. The goal posts moved swiftly, flying in the sky, dashing on the ground, or even taunting the players right at their face. There were also transparent shields that appeared and disappeared in front of the goal posts. These shields were playing the role of the goalkeepers.

As for the rules of the game? There was none in particular. All they had to do was to score a goal. The team could kill their opponents and keep them in check as long as they could accept the risk of falling behind the others in terms of goals. Not long after, a ball appeared in front of each of the teams.

[The first five minutes of the game is set for the players to familiarize themselves with the ball.]

[The movement and trajectory of the ball will vary depending on how strong your attack is.]

Victor, one of the Russian Team's players, was a former soccer player that also represented Russia before. He was also one of the close combat fighters in their team and had learned the Korean traditional martial arts, taekwondo, an art that used powerful kicks to attack the enemies.

To put it simply, Victor viewed this 'Penalty Shoot-Out' event as something ridiculous and funny. In fact, he firmly believed that Russia would win the gold medal for this event. Of course, it was all on the basis that Russia had named him as someone that could reach the Summit Five.

Countless cameras zoomed in on Victor's face.

[It seems like this game is very much suited for Russia's Victor, a former soccer player, a taekwondo martial artist, and a close combat fighter class player.]

[You're absolutely right. Plenty of people are expecting him to score a lot of goals in this event.]

[Yes. To add to the explanations, the cooldown of the skills and abilities that the players will use during the five minute preparation period will be reset once the actual game starts.]

Meanwhile, Victor confidently stood in front of the ball and slowly pulled his leg back.

*‘A ball like this will easily move around with just a basic attack.’*

Victor was a player whose class focused on strengthening the legs. And when he kicked the ball strongly...!

Boom—

A loud noise erupted as the ball moved. However, shockingly enough, the ball stopped after flying for about 1.5 meters.

[...?]

[...?]

[...?]

The audience looked at Victor strangely. Even the other representatives felt strange.

Boom—

Booom—

Boooooom—

They punched, kicked, slammed it with an iron mace, and even used their skills, but the ball only moved within a five meter radius from their starting point.

“No, what the hell is this...?!”

Only then did the players start using their individual skills.

Baaaaaang—

Even though they used their skills, the balls only flew up as if someone just kicked it normally.

That was when they remembered the ‘red dot’ on the ball. According to the rules, the ball would move easily as long as they accurately hit it on that spot. However, there was a problem. The red dot was literally just a small red dot on the ball, and it was very difficult to find with the naked eye.

[The Red Dot System is closely related to the concept of critical strikes. Just like inside the Athenae game, our chances of getting a critical strike increases when we hit a vital point. The only difference here is that the vital point is reduced to the size of a dot.]

[However, even if you struck the red dot, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the ball will move. The force of your attack must be concentrated on that red dot for the ball to move. In other words, just striking the red dot on the ball won’t mean anything. Let’s put it this way, assuming that the red dot is 1 and the rest of the ball is 99, you have to focus at least 50% of your power and damage into that one point for the ball to move.]

[I don’t think it’s possible for anyone to move the ball using that red dot.]

[I agree. The red dot is an element taken from the critical strike rate system that Joy Co. Ltd added for fun.]



Meanwhile, the representatives from each country were all sighing.

“I think we can only move the ball with our skills, right?”

“Ahh! What the hell is this ball?!”

Fortunately, they still have their buff abilities. As long as they used their buff abilities and increased their basic attack power, they would be able to move the ball a lot. And if they used their skills on top of that, the ball would move sharply as if it had been kicked normally. Through trial and error, they each found out that the ball could be moved and controlled with skills, buffs and occasional passive skills.

But then, at that moment...

Thud—

Thuuuuuuud—

Thuuuuuuuuud—

Thuuuuuuuuud—

A strange sound began to ring loudly in the stadium. All of the representatives turned their heads to look at the direction of the sound. The sound was, in fact, the sound of the ball getting hit. When they finally turned completely, they saw Minhyuk holding a sword with one hand while his other hand was placed over his eyes, as if he was checking if the course of the basketball-like ball was correct and if he had hit it properly. Everyone knew what that meant.

“What the hell?! Are you telling me that his basic damage is much higher than mine?!”

“Crazy...”

Then, something unexpected happened.

“I think I can make it fly further...” Minhyuk mumbled to himself. Then, he used his sword to hit the ball.

Thud—

Minhyuk’s sword struck the falling ball accurately and then...

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

Baaaaaaaang!

A bloody lightning bolt struck down from the skies accompanied by a loud explosion the moment his sword made contact with the ball. The ball flew straight towards one of the goal posts. A transparent shield immediately appeared around the goal post to act as the goalkeeper, but it was no use. The net of the goal post was already fluttering wildly from the ball rotating fiercely inside it.

[Gooooooooooooal! It’s a goal!!!]

[The game hasn’t started yet but Player Minhyuk has already scored a goal!]

Minhyuk’s following words brought shock to the other representatives that were focused on him. He said, “It’s easy.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

## Chapter 409: Penalty Shoot-Out

The former Russian soccer player Victor, as well as the other representatives, who were pondering over how to control the ball, were all left speechless when they heard Minhyuk's words.

*‘Did he just say that it was easy?’*

*‘How is this thing easy?’*

Just making the ball move was a difficult task in itself. In fact, the damage needed to move the ball was set by Joy Co. Ltd., by calculating the average damage output of all the representatives.

However, could the ball be moved like a normal ball? Of course not.

The reason why rankers were called rankers was because their gaming skills far surpassed that of the ordinary population. One common example of this was the FPS-game Battle Lord. The game would start on one island where 100 players would pick up weapons scattered all over the place and use it to fight against their opponents. Professional players could garner 10 kills, 20 kills, or even more than 30 kills by themselves, in an environment where they had the same HP, same speed, and same weapons. Everything that they had was equal, but at the same time they were all different. Their control skills made them a cut above the rest.

The rankers needed to utilize their skills to manage and control the movement and trajectory of the ball. However, Minhyuk was showing them that his skills were beyond theirs. To move the ball and let it fly like that, he had to have at least a 1.5x higher attack than everyone present here. And...

*‘What the hell was that lightning? The ball flew swiftly after receiving a tremendous force from the lightning that struck it after receiving a hit from his sword.’*

Victor came to a conclusion of his own, *‘It must be his active and buff skill.’*

Just like Minhyuk's Ellie's Swordsmanship, plenty of players had various buff skills ranging from artifact buff skills, to battle buff skills, and plenty more. These kinds of buff skills, however, were subjected to a cooldown. And Victor was convinced that the bloody lightning that appeared after Minhyuk used his sword was an active skill.

*‘Over-buffed and over-skilled! How can you strut proudly with a power that anybody can have?!’*

In the end, buff skills and active skills were restricted. Especially skills that could increase the player's attack power by 1.5x. Skills like that usually had a duration of only ten minutes. In the end, all of the representatives came to the same conclusion.

*'What a moron.'*

*'He shouldn't have acted so conceitedly. These five minutes were the time to get the feel for the ball, not to act so high and mighty.'*

*'He already exposed one of his powers. A buff that greatly increases the attack power and an active skill that triggers lightning strikes. I will remember that.'*

*'It seems like the Food God is a stupid fool, contrary to the rumors that I have been hearing.'*

That was right. None of them wanted to show off their buff and active skills before the game started. And that was not all. Root was shooting arrows in the air as if he was trying to get the feel of his bow, while Ali did not even bother to touch the ball.

Alex, the world's official number one mage, thought, *'The Koreans have gone crazy!'* and smiled deeply. He never expected that they would let Ali play. The Penalty Shoot-Out game did not have many rules. Alex wanted to take advantage of this game to PK Ali, who was infinitely weaker than him, and sought to do so the moment the game started.

On the other hand, a man stood among the other representatives from the France Team and stared at Minhyuk.

*'Food God...!'*

The man glaring at Minhyuk was none other than Calauhel, the leader of Blackstone and the head of one of the richest and noble families in the world, the Rothschilde Family.

Calauhel had undergone several earth-shattering changes after being brutally PKed by Minhyuk in the Demon World's Tower. He decided to stop hiding his existence and let the world know about who he was. He was Calauhel of the Rothschilde Family, one of the Summit Five, and was also one of France's representative players. He had a power that could rival an entire kingdom by himself. And, he came here to hunt Minhyuk.

Just like that, the balls that appeared in front of the players disappeared into thin air.

[The game will now begin!]

[The Penalty Shoot-Out game is divided into two halves. Both halves had a duration of forty minutes. Representative teams with similar scores vying for the gold, silver, and bronze medals will play in an overtime match.]

[The first event of the Athenae: World War!!! The game with the most rankers!!! The Penalty Shoot-Out has started!!!]

Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

With the commentators' words as the signal, the players all dashed forward to welcome the hundreds of balls that started to fall down from the skies.

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The representative players swiftly dashed forward as hundreds of balls fell down! These were the strongest players that hid their power during the five minute preparation time!

America's Alexander, the Ghost of the Battlefield, ran among these players. He was not recognized as one of the Summit Five since he was working unofficially. However, the truth was his power and talent was comparable to the Summit Five.

Hundreds of greatswords appeared and surrounded the Ghost of the Battlefield, Alexander, which flew straight towards the hundreds of falling balls.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang!

[Ghost of the Battlefield Alexander's 'Greatsword Battleground' has appeared in front of us! From what I heard, each greatsword has a 600% increase in attack!]

[Alexander is already a great dealer. And if he has an additional 600% increase in attack, then he will be able to move however he wants!]

The moment Alexander's sword made contact with the balls they flew straight towards the goalposts.

Baaaaaaang!

Flash—

[Goaaaaaaaaa!]

Flaaaaaaash—

[And another goaaaaa! Alexander has scored goals one after the other! He made a total of eight goals in one go!]

[America's Alexander will definitely play a key role moving forward in this game!]

[However, unlike the hundreds of greatswords that Alexander had let out to hit those balls, the number of points that he had scored is a bit pitiful.]

[Even though he has the ability to send out hundreds of greatswords, taking control of the ball itself is a very difficult feat. As you can see, most of the balls that his sword had hit flew wildly and did not even get anywhere near the goal posts.]

However, Alexander was not the only one garnering attention. There was also the French Team's Calauhel. Calauhel opened his fan, a disaster artifact that could create storms. He had been able to strengthen Gorac's Disaster Artifact once again. Because of that, he had reached a level where he could freely control the storm's power.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Flutter—

Strong winds started to blow in the stadium. Everyone knew that the ball would only fly if the attack reached a certain damage. However, he was able to make the balls fly under the constant onslaught of damage from the force of the wind.

[Several balls flew up in the sky!]

[They look like balloons that flew up from the force of the wind!]

Calauhel pointed his fan towards the goal posts. As if following his orders, the wind blew strongly and made the balls fly straight towards the posts one after the other.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom—

[Calauhel scores 14 straight goals!]

[France is also making great progress!]

[There's also Japan's Kentaro! He's surprisingly quick-footed! Heok! Kentaro's way of scoring goals is very surprising! He's using the red dot! He's hitting the red dot to move the ball!]

[My goodness! So, it was really possible!]

[It seems like Kentaro has a skill that allows him to accurately hit the 'vital point'.]

[Currently, America has 21 goals, France has 19 goals, Japan has 14 goals, and China has 12 goals! Even though the players looked flustered when they first made contact with the ball, they're all scoring goals in their own ways!]

And amidst them...

Thuuuuuud—

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

A powerful and loud explosion caught the attention of all of the players present. This was because this was a very familiar sound. And over there, they saw Minhyuk skillfully hitting the ball with his sword and scoring goals.

[Korea has scored four goals!]

[That's the fifth goal! They have scored five goals in a row!]

[Player Minhyuk has been scoring one goal after another.]

[Korea is currently 30th, but it's really amazing to see Player Minhyuk scoring most of their goals!]

*'His skill is going to end soon anyway!'*

*'Once that skill ends, he won't be a big deal anymore!'*

That was what everyone believed. Meanwhile, Ali and Root were both getting ready. Root was holding his breath and waiting for something, while Ali was preparing something too. Then, at that moment...

[It's the golden ball! The golden ball has made its first appearance!!!]

[Just a few minutes after the game has started, the greatest variable of the event, the golden ball, has appeared!]

A bright golden light flashed brightly the moment the golden ball appeared! Every player present had their eyes trained on the golden ball that started to fall down from the sky. Just one goal with this ball and they would be able to score ten points! All of them started to run for the falling goal.

"Run!"

“As long as we make a goal with that golden ball then we’ll be able to turn the tides in our favor!”

Hundreds of players ran towards the ball. And by chance, the one closest to the golden ball was Calauhel. Then...

Baaaaaaaang—

The golden ball slammed down into the ground loudly. It was so loud that it was comparable to a bomb explosion. Just with the sound alone, anyone could tell that the ball was extremely heavy and would be very hard to control. But, at that moment...

Baaaaaaaang—

The golden ball moved on its own. It was only natural. After all, they had announced that the golden ball had a will of its own. The golden ball, which had flown up on its own, slammed into the players running forward to try and make a goal with it.

Baaaaaaaang—

“Keheeeeek!”

“Keuaaaaack!”

Some of the representative players flew back, just like bowling pins being hit by the bowling ball. Just like that, the golden ball flew wildly in the field. But once the golden ball flew back to the position where it had originally fallen from, Calauhel immediately used his one-shot kill skill.

[Maestro’s Lethal Blow]

[A strong force will extend 15 meters from the tip of your sword and accurately stab the opponent’s vital point, incurring an additional 1500% damage.]

Thuuuuuuuuump—

A strong force extended from the tip of Callauhel’s sword and accurately aimed for the ball. The skill had a 100% chance of stabbing the vital point which would allow Calauhel to stab the golden ball’s ‘red dot’ accurately. The attack would then add a strong spin to the ball and make it enter the goal post. Nothing was lacking, the strength, the power, everything was perfect. Then, the force and the golden ball collided.

Baaaaaaaang—

And just like expected, the golden ball flew fiercely towards the goal post.

[Aaaaaaaaah! The golden ball is flying towards the goal!]

[Looking at the speed of the ball, it looks like it will land safely into the goal post before the shield appears!]

[Will France turn the tables of this game just like that?!]

But suddenly...

Shwaaaaaa—

One man held his breath as he sharply drew the strings of his bow while watching the course of the golden ball. And when the man released the strings...

Piiiiing—

An arrow made of light flew fiercely, grazing the golden ball flying towards the goal post. That was right, the arrow just brushed against the ball.

There was one loophole that the Korean team wanted to take advantage of. This Penalty Shoot-Out game was different from soccer. No one owned the goal post and whoever touched the ball last would be recognized as the one that made the goal.

Yes, the arrow made of light just lightly grazed the golden ball, it did not even change the course of the ball. However, it successfully changed the ‘last hitter’.

Thuuuuump—

The goal post shook wildly as the score of one country rose significantly.

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

All of the screen showed the figure of a smiling man holding his bow. Knowing that all of the cameras were focused on him, the man raised his left wrist and flaunted the ‘Korean Flag’ drawn on it. This action made the flames burning in the hearts of all the Korean people watching burn brightly. All of them called out the name of this man loudly.

“Root!!!”

“Root!!!”

“Root! Root! Root! Root! Root!”

The audience cheered loudly, and at the center of it all was Korea’s Master Archer, Root.

#### Chapter 410: Penalty Shoot-Out

Root was once a part of the Korean national team that was sent to the Olympics. However, a harrowing accident left him with a paralyzed lower body. Since then, Root lived a life cut off from the rest of the world, wallowing in despair.

That was until he encountered the game called *Athenae*. In that world, he was once again able to shoot the bow that he loved as much as he wanted to. And while he played alone, he was able to meet the gamer named Minhyuk and became a member of the guild called ‘Legend Guild’.

Root often met up with the members of Let’s Eat Sect for get-togethers. The members did not care and treated Root warmly like they were family, even after knowing that he lived alone and that he

had a body that was uncomfortable to move with. This warmth gave Root a new driving force to move forward and turn the Archery Representative Root into the *Athenae* Representative Root!

[Goaaaaaaaaal!]

[And that's a goal!!! Korea has scored with the golden ball!!!]

[Unbelievable! Calauhel's blow added a fierce momentum to the ball which increased its speed tremendously to the point that we couldn't even follow it with the naked eye! How was he able to graze that with his arrow?!!]

[My jaw just dropped open at the sight.]

[Oh my god! Root, the only archer player in this game and the player that everyone thought would be useless in the game, is doing a good job! He's making Korea soar higher!]

Minhyuk nodded at Root and Ali as they made eye contact. Root, who was smiling slightly, raised the bow in his hand and let loose a series of arrows. The arrows that were flying fiercely in the skies were no different, no, perhaps even more shocking and stronger with the help of *Athenae*'s game system, than the arrows that he had sent flying during his heyday as a national archer representative.

Root's arrows accurately struck the ball's red dot.

Thump—

Fueled with the force of Root's arrow, the ball went straight into the goal post.

Thud—

The sight of the goal post shaking wildly left the entire world in shock.

[Another goal!!! Unbelievable!!!]

[Root accurately struck the red dot on the ball, sending it directly to the goal!]

However, Root's hand did not stop moving.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

Root's arrows accurately struck the balls' red dots which sent four of them straight into the goal posts!

[Ko... Korea's team has reached a total of 26 points! The gap between them and the other teams has widened!!!]

[P... Player Root has proven himself to be a great variable!]

President Kang Taehoon, who was working as a special commentator, sat among the other commentators and explained the situation.

[Player Root's skills with the bow are completely unbelievable! According to our analysis, striking the ball's red dot with the player's individual ability and *Athenae*'s archery skills is comparable to scoring the highest score in the Archery Olympics.]

Kang Taehoon's explanation made the fire in the hearts of the Koreans burn even brighter. However, because of Root's outstanding display, the other representative teams had come to a consensus.



“Kill him!”

“Kill that archer!!!”

“You want to take away our scores, huh?!”

That was right, Root became their number one target. Minhyuk nodded quietly after making eye contact with Ali. Then, with Calauhel at the lead, dozens of rankers rushed to attack Root with their skills, magic, and basic attacks.

However, before they could reach Root, Black Mage Ali, who they had believed to have regressed back into being a novice player, stepped forward.

“Ali?” Alex murmured while sending plenty of Fire Balls at Root. But not long after, he laughed to himself, *‘What can you do?! Huh?! You have lost all of your power!’*

All of the players were thinking the same thing.

*‘You’re just here to fill the numbers...!’*

*‘We will definitely kill Root!’*

*‘Mage Ali will just die with him. Heh.’*

[Mage Ali steps forward to protect Root!]

[However, I don’t know why Mage Ali stepped forward to protect Root.]

[Ali has not taken any action so far so plenty of people said that he just participated to fill in the numbers.]

Ali, on the other hand, was looking at the stands where the Korean Team’s families were seated. He saw his beloved hyung, Yoon Ji-Seok, standing among them and holding a placard that he wrote himself. Although his letters were a bit crooked, the message still brought a gushing warmth to Ali’s heart.

[Strongest Mage Ali! Fighting!!!]

Ali wanted to tell his hyung, *‘Hyung, you don’t need to worry about me anymore. Hyung, your brother, Yoon Ji-Hoo... that little boy that had a social anxiety disorder has grown up and has overcome his fears.’*

Dozens of skills, magic, and basic attacks started to fall down on Ali and Root. However, in Ali’s eyes, everything was moving in slow motion. He smiled slightly before raising his hand and snapping his fingers.

Snap—

With a snap, everything stopped. The dozens of powerful magic and skills and even the players with their swords, spears and maces stopped. The wide area covered by this huge stadium, this entire space, stopped for Ali. His smile grew wider as he looked at the Fireball that stopped right at the tip of his nose. Even the stands seemed to have stopped as their eyes focused on him.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Deafening shouts shook the entire world! Among them, was Ali’s hyung, Yoon Ji-Seok, with a bright and wide smile on his face. Ali had shown them another miracle. And the scene created by that miracle made them doubt their eyes.

[N... no way! That magic is not ‘Space Stasis’ right?!]

[It’s totally unbelievable! The Space Stasis can really stop anything and everything around the caster but I haven’t heard anything about it having such a wide radius!]

[No. I think that’s really Space Stasis. Its range of effect is entirely dependent on the caster’s mana, stats, and class.]

Then, one of the commentators asked...

[Th... then if that’s the case, how high has Ali reached now?]

[...]

Silence reigned among the commentators.

Meanwhile, Ali brandished his Staff of Despair. With a swing of his staff, all of the magic and skills that aimed for him and Root started to move again. But this time, they were moving back to the players that sent them.

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

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

“Keheok!”

“Keok!”

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

The opposing players shrieked in pain. They could not understand what had happened, let alone what was going on. However, there was someone among them that understood. This man was none other than Alex, the world’s official number one mage.

Tremble—

Alex’s body trembled wildly, his thoughts stunned into silence. For a moment, he wondered if he could display even a fifth of the level of the Space Stasis that Ali had just casted. But he knew that he could not.

It was at this point in time that they realized that Ali, who everyone laughed at, and Root, who they ignored, had proven themselves to be huge variables in this game. This was something that all of the people from all over the world had witnessed. After all, almost everyone was tuned in and watching them since this was the very first game of the very first World War.

“Impossible!!!” Alex shouted as he summoned one Hellfire after the other.

Crackle, crackle—

“Alex...!” Alexander’s face crumpled in annoyance as he shouted at Alex. They were in the same team and he knew that Alex, as a mage, should save his MP. Besides, using AOE magic required high concentration, which would put him at a risk of gaining the attention of everyone and receiving the attacks of the enemies that were spread out in the field.

However, for some reason, Alex felt that he would forever remain in second place if he failed to kill Ali at this point in time.

Crackle, crackle—

Gigantic fire from hell shot straight towards Ali. Alex smiled after hearing the notification about his passive skill, a skill that ignored the opponent’s magical defense and increased his magic’s penetration by 40%, getting triggered.

However, Ali just stretched out his index finger and said, “Dispel.”

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The Hellfires rushing towards Ali disappeared into thin air. Then...

Fwoosh—

...two golden spears created from a more powerful ‘Diss’ stretched out from Ali’s fingertip and pierced through Alex’s chest, one after the other.

“Urk...?”

Alex was a mage player. Most mage players had low HP and defense as a balance for their ridiculously high magical defense and mana. But then, there was Ali’s magic.

*‘What kind of ridiculous damage is this...?’*

Ali’s magic was at a level where Alex’s magical defense could not keep up with.

Collapse—

It only took 1.7 seconds for the world’s official number one mage, Alex, to lose the battle against Ali.

[Mage Ali forced America Team’s Alex to log out in one shot!]

[The scene that I’m witnessing right now is completely unbelievable!]

The entire world was left in shock. Ali had logged out the world’s official number one mage in just a single shot! His display of magic placed him at a level where no one could easily touch him. However, the flamboyant display also made him into a target.

*‘I didn’t know that Korea is hiding such variables!’*

*‘I definitely heard that Ali has regressed back to Level 1. What’s going on here?!’*

*‘We have to kill him! Otherwise, they’ll get the gold medal.’*

The thoughts of everyone present were divided into two. There were those that wanted to score goals since the others were fighting against each other, and there were those that wanted to eliminate the most dangerous enemies first.

Among those that chose to eliminate the enemies, Calauhel stood at the forefront. Calauhel was completely furious about his golden ball getting stolen.

But, as they narrowed their distance with Ali and Root, one man continued to silently do his job. This man was none other than Minhyuk.

Thuuuump—

Minhyuk watched as their opponents approached his teammates, while calmly scoring one goal after the other.

Thuuuuuump—

With every goal that he scored, the approaching representatives felt their mouths twitch. Only then did the other players take the time to look at how much time had passed in the game.

More than twenty minutes have passed in the game, so how come Minhyuk was still going strong?

*‘What the hell? How come his buff is still not ending?’*

They expected the buff, which increased Minhyuk’s attack by 1.5x, to have a short duration. It was a common occurrence and balance to buff abilities that increased power by a tremendous amount. So, how come? Just when they were wondering about that...

“Ellie’s Swordsmanship.”

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

...a red current appeared and surrounded Minhyuk before it got sucked inside his body.

“...?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

Only then did they realize...

*‘He wasn’t using any buff skill?!’*

*‘Are you telling me that his basic attack and damage is 1.5x higher than ours?!’*

Terror. Yes, terror.

Right now, the player named Minhyuk struck fear and terror, along with a sense of helplessness to the national representatives.