

## Gourmet 411

### Chapter 411: Penalty Shoot-Out

They finally realized that it was not Minhyuk who was stupid, it was them. Minhyuk had completely deceived them and his actions had told them about how foolish they were for assuming that he was just a nobody. He was also telling them that he would now start to play this game seriously by finally using his buff skill. At this moment, the players felt...

*‘He’s the most dangerous person right now.’*

*‘He’s more eye-catching than the other players from Korea...!’*

This was because they could tell that the stadium would be rife with screams the moment the game reached the thirty minute mark. By that time, most of the representatives’ skill had reached cooldown and would be struggling to somehow get the ball to move, with just their basic attacks.

In fact, most of the rankers present had already used 50% of their skills and abilities. The worst part was that their HP and skill cooldown would not reset with the start of the second half.

Then, what about Minhyuk?

*‘He has only used two skills so far. He had just used his buff skill and that mysterious skill where he triggers a bloody lightning bolt with each strike.’*

*‘Korea is even in first place...!’*

Minhyuk only used his basic attacks to score countless goals earlier. He was fully aware that the other players would immediately exclude him from their list of hostile and dangerous targets. So, he silently scored goals and took advantage of their errors in judgment.

The players all broke out in cold sweat after realizing how much of a huge disaster Minhyuk poised to be. However, what they failed to notice was the fact that those bloody lightning strikes with explosive power created from a spark from Minhyuk’s sword was not an ‘active skill’.

Then, Helion, one of the members of the France National Team and a player known to have a high HP reserve, stepped forward and took the lead. Their common enemy now was the Korean Team. Plenty of them had judged that their own country would not be able to win that gold medal, so they decided to not let Korea, a country that they mocked and sneered at, win any medal at all.

Helion, who stepped forward to lead the attack, was hailed as France’s Tanker God. He was originally a paladin class and had plenty of special skills attached to his class. And one of those skills was:

[Shield of Nullification]

[Neutralizes all of the damage that the opponent’s active skill could incur.]

This was Helion’s special skill, a skill that everyone in the world knew about, the Shield of Nullification! This skill had even nullified a legendary class monster’s active skills, which allowed him to successfully hunt the monster and gain a lot of attention. Yes, that was right. They were also that kind of existence. One should not forget that these were also rankers that represented their own countries.

“The Shield of Nullification...!”

“That’s right! If it’s that power, then...!”

If they could stop the Food God from using his active skills, then they, the majority, would be able to kill him. As long as the Food God was left in a state where he was literally shackled by that skill, they would be able to easily kill him.

Everyone charged at Minhyuk with fierce momentum. At the same time, the Lightning Explosion branded on Minhyuk’s sword disappeared and changed into Lightning Destruction. Then, Minhyuk swung his sword to stop the rushing Helion.

“You won’t be able to deal with me with just your basic attacks!” Helion shouted as he continued to rush forward with fierce momentum. Then, his sword collided with Minhyuk’s sword.

Claaaaaaaaang—

Helion clashed a few times with Minhyuk and was able to see the red sparks start to form in Minhyuk’s sword.

“Your active skills are useless...!”

But then...

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

Eight bloody lightning strikes struck Helion in one go.

“Keuaaaaaaaaaaack!” Helion shrieked as his HP dropped by 40% in an instant. Alas, the shocking notifications did not end there.

[You have been stunned for two seconds.]

Helion’s pupils shook wildly as he stared at Minhyuk in shock and disbelief. There were two reasons why he was in disbelief. First, Minhyuk’s damage was tremendous. And, second...

“It’s, it’s a passive skill?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

The players, who worked together with Helion believing that Minhyuk’s active skill would be neutralized, stopped in their tracks.

The explosive speed and power that Minhyuk packed into the balls that he sent to the goal was not an active skill, but a passive skill! Helion trembled wildly when he realized this. However, fear did not brew in his mind for long, as he died with a swift and painless stab to the neck.

Collapse—

Helion slowly collapsed. With his death, the total number of players that the Korean Team had logged out had increased to two. However, the most shocking part was the fact that both of the players that they killed were players that had been deified by their own countries.

Minhyuk's gaze turned cold as he watched his opponents look helplessly at each other. Then, he opened his mouth and spat, "Wow. Look at that..." Then, a cold smile lingered at the corners of his mouth as he continued to say, "...I'll force you all to log out."

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

Minhyuk's smile brought fear and terror to his opponents. They did not even dare to imagine how much strength and power was hiding behind Minhyuk's cold and ruthless smile.

"Hi... hiiiiiiiik...!"

"Crazy bastards! There are only three of you!"

Indeed, there were only three players in the Korean Team, while they were still in the dozens. Besides, the fact that they were their own countries' representatives would not change. They also had their own 'one-shot kill' skills and powerful AOE skills. They believed that they would be able to kill them, as long as they hit them hard enough. After all, talent alone would not allow the three of them to hold out against their numbers.

The problem was that they also needed to save some of their skills. They might be rankers, but they were also players participating in this game. They also wanted to leave some room for themselves to score goals for their own teams.

However, Ali also started to join in scoring goals for the Korean Team. It was as if they wanted to set their opponents' antsy hearts on fire.

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

The other players watched as dozens of sparking spheres flew up in the air. These spheres were none other than the manifestation of Energy Bolt, the most basic magic spell in a mage's arsenal.

However, the effect of this magic was entirely dependent on the mage that was using it. And Ali, with the help of the Mana Heart's power, had an unbelievable amount of magical attack.

Just like that, dozens of Energy Bolts flew straight towards the falling balls.

Baaaaaang—

Baaaaaang—

Baaaaaang—

The Energy Bolts accurately struck the balls and gave them a powerful boost that brought them straight towards the goal posts.

"He can use Energy Bolts to move the balls?!"

“What the hell?! How high is his magical attack?!”

The players found themselves in another difficult predicament. They were fully aware that mage players were the ones that could score the most in this game.

If that was the case, what would happen if that very same mage player could easily score goals just by using low-tier magic?

Simply put, they could score even more. However, in reality, this was an impossible feat. Even the official world’s number one mage, Alex, could not move the balls with a low-tier magic like Energy Bolt. But, Ali could do it. Taking into consideration the amount of mana that he has, the players could already tell that he would be able to cast thousands of Energy Bolt in one go.

Then, suddenly, a man holding the fan that could call forth storms, an artifact hailed as a disaster artifact, stepped forward. Seeing this man make a move brought a small smile to the players’ faces. Yes, that was right. They were just cooperating with their opponents for a while. And the opponent that they cooperated with was none other than the owner of France’s Rothschilde Family, Calauhel.

Calauhel, the player that became one of the Summit Five not too long ago, was the head of the global Athenae alliance ‘Blackstone’. Also, as the owner of the Rothschilde family, he had plenty of money and assets in his hands. Naturally, the value of the artifacts on his body were beyond anyone’s imagination. Yes. He literally stood at the peak using his money.

*‘Our power will be enough to deal with him if we fight together with Calauhel.’*

*‘No. It would even be an easy feat.’*

The players looked completely funny with their noses high up in the sky, acting all conceited and proud.

The first to move was France’s Antoine, a player on the same team as Calauhel in the Penalty Shoot-Out game, wielding a sturdy and tough iron mace that could easily allow him to whack his opponent into a stunned state. Antoine raised his iron mace up with all his might and swung it strongly towards the Korean Team. This was the first shot.

Fwoosh—

“Lightning God’s Wrath!”

A powerful lightning bolt fell down from the sky as another player raised his spear and pointed it to the skies.

Crackle—

The attack brought forth an extremely formidable momentum! With those attacks acting as signals to start, dozens of attack skills poured down on the Korean Team.

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang—

Ali hurriedly casted one golden shield on top of the other in front of the Korean Team.

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

Despite the dozens of attack skills that fell down on them, Ali’s golden shields did not break. In fact, he even had time to quickly cast another AOE spell, Fire Field.

Fwoosh, crackle—

Blazing heat caused by the Fire Field spread out widely under the feet of their opponents.

Crackle—

Then, tall pillars of flames erupted from the ground, forcing the other players to disperse. Root also took advantage of the gap as he raised his bow and shot the approaching enemies with his arrows. Root looked exactly like those elven marksmen that were depicted in movies as he shot two arrows with every draw of his bow!

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

But then, Calauhel stabbed Ali's golden shield with his sword.

Crack, crack, crack!

Small cracks started to spread from the golden shield. There were more than a dozen shields overlapping to create that one huge golden shield, but the shields could not withstand the attacks of Calauhel's, one of the Summit Five.

*Clang!*

The shields broke helplessly from Calauhel's attack. Dozens of players took advantage of this and rushed forward.

For the first time since the start of the game, Minhyuk cast an active skill. His first target? Calauhel.

“Sword of Absolute Death.”

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Atlas, the City of the Skies.

Three thousand people from Rocard Kingdom, who had outstanding abilities and were well-versed in farming, migrated to Food God Minhyuk's territory! They did not need any guidance as they started to plow the fields and sow the seeds on their own. Thanks to their efforts, Atlas Territory's fields' growth rate increased by 30%. Even the variety, special abilities, and quality of their crops increased by 40%.

Slowly, the people of Rocard Kingdom got used to living in Atlas Territory. And just like them, there was also one man trying to adapt and get used to living in Atlas. This man was none other than the one in charge of raising livestock.

Mercenary King Brod, or perhaps it would be more apt to call him Livestock King Brod now, was greatly disappointed when he first arrived in the territory and received the task of raising livestock. However, as time went by, his thoughts gradually changed.

The first change happened after he had a taste of Minhyuk's food. It tasted absolutely divine. It was so tasty that he even thought about it in bed. Before Minhyuk left for the competition, Brod said to him, “My lord, your cooking is truly delicious. Will you please cook for me again?”

“Those that do not do work will not eat. Sir Brod, what task are you given?”

“To... To... raise livestock...?”

“That’s right. Please think about it carefully and don’t stray too far away from your task. Then, I will give you a very sumptuous and valuable meal.”

Nevertheless, Brod still could not understand why he, the king of tens of millions of mercenaries all over the world, had to raise livestock! But, regardless of his doubts, the temptation of whatever food Minhyuk would give him was too great, that he still ended up trudging to where the pigs, cows, and chickens were being kept.

Brod sighed deeply as he looked around the pigs, chickens and cows. But eventually, he found peace of mind from the pigs: ‘Oink, oink, oink,?oink~?hwiiiik!’? and the cows: ‘Moooooooooo~’ while he fed them and gave them water.

For some strange reason, he felt calm and at peace amidst the livestock’s noises. Brod had been struggling and fighting for a long time. Although he did not realize it, he had already grown tired of that life. Besides, the pigs, cows and chickens that surrounded him did not have an ‘evil mindset’ like those ‘humans’.

“Oinkies, eat lots and lots today too.”

“Moos, what will we do if you guys poop a lot today, huh?”

“Cluck-clucks. It’s all thanks to you that we’re able to get up early in the morning!”

Brod gradually adapted to his role and even began ‘communicating’ with the livestock. But then, that day finally came. The day when the Atlas chefs had to drag his Oinkies away with the ropes in their hands.

“How... how dare you...!” Brod shouted, almost pulling his sword out. But then, he suddenly realized something as he listlessly looked at the place where his Oinkies were before.

*‘That’s the law of nature...’*

If necessary, a king would choose to kill tens of millions of people for the good of all. Wolves devour the cute and fluffy sheep, but no one would speak ill of them.

That was right! Food chains existed everywhere. And he was speaking with utter sincerity when he said that he realized how precious these beings were. They were born in a cage and raised in their confines only to die for the people. That was when Brod made a solemn vow.

*‘I promise to find a way to make you guys live more freely.’*

Yes. He was now aiming to challenge a new method of raising livestock. Since these livestock were living to give them nourishment and a better life, he ought to try and let them live more freely and comfortably. Then, the notifications rang for Brod.

[You have gained an understanding of the laws of nature.]

[You are trying to guide the animals and livestock to a better path.]

[The God of Livestock, Aevalin, has shown an interest in you.]

[You may be able to reach a shocking level in the livestock industry.]

That was right. Mercenary King Brod was now approaching the peak of the livestock industry. And although he was still unaware of it, he would also be able to raise dragons in the distant future.

#### Chapter 412: Penalty Shoot-Out

Calauhel, as the richest man in the world, did everything he could to improve himself. He used a tremendous amount of money to purchase countless artifacts, seeking to increase his power for the sake of trampling the man hailed as the Food God. That was why he was looking forward to meeting Minhyuk again.

And right now, Minhyuk was standing in front of Calauhel, using his Sword of Absolute Death. However, Calauhel was wearing the ‘Merciless Hero’s Armor’, an extremely expensive armor.

The Merciless Hero’s Armor was a legendary rank artifact, but after several strengthening and reinforcement, it could exert power that was more shocking than the ‘Demigod Artifacts’ spread all over the world.

Then, the Sword of Absolute Death engulfed Calauhel.

[Merciless Hero’s Will]

[All attacks will be nullified and all stats will increase by 15% for four seconds.]

Ping—

The Sword of Absolute Death did not deal any damage to Calauhel.

“...!”

Minhyuk frowned at the sight. As for Calauhel, he just smiled deeply as he watched hundreds of sword blades engulf him and the other players.

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

“Urk!”

“Keuaaaaaack!”

“Ugh, aaaaaaaack!”

Minhyuk’s Sword of Absolute Death was able to log out some of the players that tried to attack him and their team. However, as players that represented their countries, they had at least one skill that could counter skills like the Sword of Absolute Death. This skill allowed these players to safely stay in the game.

Calauhel, who held out firmly against the Sword of Absolute Death, approached Minhyuk slowly. There was only one reason for Calauhel’s confidence. And that was...

*‘The Merciless Hero’s Armor may not be God rank, but it can reduce both the basic and skill damage by 60%!’*

The Food God might be an excellent damage dealer, but what could a dealer do if the power that they could exert had been reduced by 60%? They would just be useless and ripe for the taking.

[Maestro of Destruction’s Rage]

*[A tremendous force will stretch out from your sword. Once this force hits the target, it will explode and deal 1,200% additional damage.]*

Calauhel grinned happily as he slammed his sword on the ground right in front of Minhyuk. Then...

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang!

...a huge explosion engulfed Minhyuk and the rest of the Korean Team.

[Ah! It's Calauhel's forte! He cast the Maestro of Destruction's Rage!]

[Calauhel is also well-known for reducing his opponent's attack power by a significant amount!]

[It's thanks to that ability that he was able to climb to the Summit Five.]

[Did you see that? The powerful Sword of Absolute Death did not deal any damage to Calauhel.]

[A powerful explosion and strong shockwave has devoured the Korean Team!]

[As expected of a Summit Five player. They're really powerful. Will Player Minhyuk and his team be able to overcome this?]

Calauhel's attack had caused a series of explosions. The 'Red Dragon Sword' was a supreme sword that ranked fourth among the Absolute Demigod Artifacts. The sword also had the special ability 'Dragon Breath' attached to it. This was the ability that was currently spreading wildly and melting anyone within a five-meter radius while dealing additional 2,000% damage.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Calauhel brandished his sword once again, which resulted in another set of explosions. However, when the explosions finally died down and the dust had settled, they were met with the Korean Team safely hiding behind a solid and thick golden barrier.

[It's Barrier!!! The mages' absolute invincible shield has been cast!!!]

[Barrier is a magic spell exclusive to high-leveled mages. This is a last resort magic spell that mages use whenever their HP and defense have reached a low level.]

[We can safely say that the Korean Team had used up a strong and great defensive measure.]

[Ah, as we speak, the American Team has taken the opportunity to surpass the Korean Team in rankings!!!]

[Alexander and James might have lost Alex in their team, but they are still making good progress in the game!]

[In the end, what we were worried about has happened! The collision between the other players had resulted in their teams being pushed back in the rankings!]

Calauhel also saw that the rankings had changed but he did not care. The main reason why he participated in this game was to hunt the 'Food God'. Anything beyond that did not matter much.

Minhyuk swiftly rushed out the moment the golden barrier started to disappear.

[Sword of Tempest]



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

Minhyuk's speed, which was already fast to begin with, increased dramatically as hundreds of blades appeared and surrounded his body while slaughtering everything that blocked his path..

"You and I both know that your attacks are useless!" Calauhel laughed mockingly. The engraved words on Minhyuk's sword instantly changed to Lightning Destruction. And when they collided...

Baaaaaang—

...his passive was triggered together with the Continent Destroyer Sword's active skill that he cast.

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

Blood-colored lightning bolts fell down from the sky one after the other and devoured Calauhel. Naturally, Calauhel believed that he would be able to nullify and ignore the damage from the attack. But...

*'What the hell?! What kind of outrageous damage is this?'*

...all he could do was stare blankly at the man in front of him as hundreds of swords with damage far beyond what he could imagine tore his body apart.

Grab—

Minhyuk took advantage of Calauhel's daze and grabbed him by the collar, dragging him to wherever Ali was pointing at. Ali, who stood behind Minhyuk, pointed his finger and cast his magic, "Compress."

Shwaaaaaaa—

With a flick of Ali's hands, all of the players that tried to approach the Korean Team were all dragged by a powerful force and gathered together in one place.

"Heup?!"

"I... I can't move!!!"

Minhyuk, with Calauhel in hand, ran to where the players were dragged to. The problem was...

"Heok?!"

"Crazy!!!"

...hundreds of blades were dancing around his body! The players, who watched Minhyuk approach them, could tell that they were facing impending doom!

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping!

The bodies of the players that Ali gathered together were mercilessly torn apart and devoured by the sword blades that surrounded Minhyuk's body. The worst part was that none of the players could stop nor avoid the sword blades. After all, the blades' attack speed had increased by 250%. Just like that, the players were forced to log out one after the other. And Calauhel...

"You bastaaaaaaaard!"

...was only momentarily stunned by the tremendous damage that Minhyuk could deal. He firmly believed that the damage and power that Minhyuk had displayed just a few moments prior were not his own and were only caused by a skill, or some kind of buff.

Then, Minhyuk released his hold on Calauhel's collar only to send him a very powerful blow.

Claaaang—

The tip of Minhyuk's sword made contact with Calauhel's Merciless Hero's Armor.

Crack, crack—

Suddenly, an ominous sound rang faintly, yet clearly, in Calauhel's ears. For a moment, he wondered if his ears were working properly. Calauhel's Merciless Hero's Armor's durability was infinite and would not really sustain any damage, unless a God-rank artifact was used against it. But right now, thin, thread-like cracks started to cover his armor from the small chip created by the tip of Minhyuk's sword.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

And finally...

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

...Calauhel's armor fell down as it broke into pieces. The skill that Minhyuk used was none other than the Continent Destroyer Sword's skill, 'Armor Break'.

## Artifact Skill

? The sword that contains God's power will have the ability to reduce an armor's durability, no matter what kind of ore or mineral was used in making the artifact.

? You will be able to deal at least 5,000 damage to the armor's durability. You will also have an 8% chance of bringing the armor's durability to zero and bringing it to destruction.

Coincidentally, Lady Luck had shone her light on Minhyuk. He was able to trigger the 8% chance in the skill and completely destroy the armor.

[You have been hit by the opponent's Armor Break.]

[Armor Break has destroyed the Merciless Hero's Armor.]

[All armors are bound to be equal and submit in the face of your opponent's sword.]

[The armor's durability has reached zero.]

[Artifacts that have reached zero durability cannot be restored and recovered.]

That was right. The armor that had made Calauhel one of the Summit Five had broken down into pieces. That was the moment when Calauhel realized that the notification about someone reaching the 'God' rank not too long ago was related to the Food God.

"You... you bastard! F\*c..."

However, Minhyuk did not let Calauhel finish his words.

[Sword of Frenzy]

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

The moment Calauhel's armor broke, Minhyuk triggered Diablo's Eyes and explored all of his vital points. Then...

Stab—

...a strike with 400% additional damage was sent out, quickly followed by one strike after another.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

The six consecutive strikes that followed the initial strike were even accompanied by lightning strikes thanks to the influence of Minhyuk's sword's passive skill.

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

And it did not end there. The surviving players within Minhyuk's five-meter radius were devoured by his Sword of Frenzy.

Ping, ping, ping, ping—

The worst part was that they were also affected by the Continent Destroyer Sword's passive skill. The very same passive skill that would only be triggered by chance. Bloody lightning bolts fell down and easily killed two players.

Collapse—

Just then, Calauhel, one of the Summit Five and someone with a power that could rival an entire kingdom, collapsed. Then...

[Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!]

[Woaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!]

[Something unbelievable just happened in front of us!!!]

[Calauhel, one of the Summit Five, collapsed in just under five minutes in a battle against Player Minhyuk!!!]

[This means that Korea's Food God Minhyuk has now climbed to the ranks of the Summit Five!!!]

Shouts and cheers shook the world while the players that survived the onslaught of Minhyuk's attack rushed to get up and disperse, putting distance between them and the Korean Team.

*'This guy has also suffered from a lot of damage.'*

*'If we attack him a few more times then we can kill him.'*

If they could kill Minhyuk, then dealing with Ali and Root would be a piece of cake. After all, the two of them were definitely vulnerable and weak when it came to close combat.

Just when they were all thinking that Minhyuk was already exhausted and weak, Minhyuk took something out of his pockets and started eating. What he took out was none other than 'Choco Pie', Korea's signature snack! And the moment Minhyuk ate the choco pie...

Fwoosh—

...the injuries that he sustained started to recover one after the other. And he did not stop there.

"Bandage!"

Minhyuk wrapped his injuries with bandages and stopped the bleeding which allowed him to recover his HP by a lot.

"Ref... referee!!! Referee!!! You told us that we're not allowed to use any potions, right?!!!"

"This is cheating!!!"

The players started protesting against the committee and the referees. Then, Team Leader Park Minggyu, who was watching the stadium and acting as the referee, said, "According to our findings, the Choco Pie is just a regular snack and does not have any special abilities nor any abilities that allow recovery. In addition, 'Bandage' only has the same effect as using bandages to cover wounds in real life for people that have not learned the skill. They are not against the rules."

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

Yes, only the Food God had the skill that could help him recover through eating. On top of that, the effects of the bandage from the Bandage skill would not be expressed if one has not mastered the skill. It was safe to say that both were the Food God's skills.

"Ugh... Uuuuuuuuuuuuugh..."

"Shit... how can we beat someone like that?!"

Everyone looked at Minhyuk in horror. And just like that, the first half of the game ended and the scores of the teams were displayed.

### Chapter 413: Death's Performance

All of the commentators began discussing the events that unfolded during the first half of the game.

[We witnessed a series of surprises during the first half. This was true especially with the Korean Team who shocked the entire world with their overwhelming performance!]

[Ali, who they said had regressed back to Level 1, came back even stronger, while Master Archer Root showed us a far more sophisticated archery skills than from his time as a national archery representative. And there's also the Food God... He truly lives up to his name.]

[Yes, that's right. A lot of countries have shown us their amazing powers. Just like Alexander, he has proven to us that he's truly the strongest and the best among all of the players.]

[Just like the Korean Team, Alexander has also been targeted by the other countries' representatives. However, instead of engaging in a fight, he avoided them and focused on scoring goals. True to his name: 'Ghost of the Battlefield', he used his 'ghost' to get away and escape from his opponents' sights and keep scoring.]

[We can all agree that that's an extremely smart strategy. It's a bit hard for me to say this since they did a good job, but it looks like the Korean Team would be having a hard time getting a medal.]

[It's mainly because they have no choice but to fight fiercely against their opponents. They do not have Alexander's 'ghosts' which makes it harder for them to escape their enemies.]

[Perhaps showing off in the early stages had brought an adverse effect to the Korean Team.]

[Alright. Now, let me explain how the second half works. Most of the rules in the first half still work for the second half. However, there will be a special 'time' waiting for our players twenty seconds before the end of the game. This special time is none other than the 'Golden Time'. Once the Golden Time starts, dozens of golden balls will fall down on a certain area in the field. Anyone could turn the tables as long as they score goals with these golden balls that would appear in the last twenty seconds of the game.]

[That's right. They can possibly turn the tables. However, you have seen players like Alexander, Root and Japan's Kentaro scoring goals with the golden ball. Scoring a goal with the golden ball is not an easy task.]

[We can confidently say that it's very hard to score a goal with the golden ball in just under twenty seconds. After all, the golden ball has a will of its own. There's also the fact that the players would do their best to keep each other in check.]

[There are only thirty seconds left before the second half starts! Right now, we can see that the representatives from each of the countries are having a discussion.]

[They need to have a new strategy for the second half of the game.]

[The Korean players are also having a discussion.]

Ppiiiiiiiiiii—

[As we speak, the second half begins!]

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Second half.

Alexander and James flew all over the stadium, rushing after balls to score goals.

Thuuuump—

Alexander chuckled lightly after striking another goal.

At first, it seemed like Korea was doing well. However, as time went by, the gap in their scores began to widen. Alexander acknowledged the strength of the Korean players, however he could not help but think about how foolish their choice was.

*‘You drew too much attention in the first half.’*

In fact, the Korean Team would definitely be able to perform well in the second half. With America at the lead, the other teams had chosen to ignore them in favor of keeping the team ranked first in check and scoring goals to quickly catch up. Of course, their scores were not enough for them to win the gold medal but if things continued at this rate, the Korean Team would most likely be thrown out of the top ten rankings.

At that moment, Alexander wondered, *‘That’s strange?’*

He was located quite far away from where the Korean Team players were, so he could not pinpoint them from the other players. America was currently in the lead, so Korea was not that much of a threat to any of the top ranking teams. However, they were still unable to make a huge splash. This meant that the other players were still entangling with them and keeping them in check.

*‘Why are they still keeping Korea in check?’*

Just when the thought flashed in Alexander’s head...

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

...a player suddenly appeared in the sky and attempted to cut him down with his ax. But the ax just brushed past Alexander’s body, which had turned translucent after he turned himself into a ghost, before slamming on the ground.

Slash—

Alexander took advantage of the gap and slashed the man’s neck neatly. James was also seen logging out the man’s colleague. Yes, it was without a doubt that the American Team was the best team at this point in time.

[America’s Alexander and James are really powerful.]

[There are only two people left in their team but they can still easily keep their opponents at bay while scoring goals one after the other.]

[The American Team stood firmly on the number one spot ten minutes after the second half had started.]

[The fact that the gold will belong to the American Team will remain unchanged unless some other variable suddenly pops out. To be honest, Alexander is much stronger than Calauhel in terms of power, he just hid himself and his power really well. But from what I heard, he is hailed as the strongest.]

[There are actually rumors saying that Alexander will not lose even if he faces all five players of the Summit Five.]

Alexander was indeed a legend. He was very famous for turning the American Server's Koiku Kingdom into a wasteland with his power alone. Of course, Koiku Kingdom was one of the weaker kingdoms.

However, even if it was weak, it was still a kingdom and it was a huge feat for an individual to assassinate its king and queen amidst the hundreds of thousands of troops stationed inside the kingdom. There was also the story about how he swept the kingdom's elite knights. Just like Minhyuk, who created a 'legend' by hunting Vormon, Alexander also had plenty of legends under his belt. This was the reason why the Americans called him as the strongest candidate for the championship. In fact, Alexander had always been hailed as the strongest and the best among all of the 'rankers' in *Athenae*.

Alexander brandished his sword once again.

Thuuump—

The goal post rattled loudly as the ball went in.

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President Kang Taehoon, with his headset on and working as a special commentator, chewed on his lips. Team Leader Park Minggyu, who was acting as the referee, was standing next to him.

Minggyu felt the piercing gazes from behind him. The branch managers looked at him proudly and talked condescendingly as if to flaunt that they already knew that this would happen.

"They did their best but it seems like the Korean Team will only barely remain in the top ten."

"You were so confident back then but what a pity, huh?"

"Tsk. Tsk. Team Leader Park Minggyu is so brazen. I would definitely clean you up if you get transferred to our branch."

President Kang Taehoon, who also felt their stinging gazes, looked at Minggyu and asked, "Hey, what did you talk about during the branch managers' meeting?"

"I didn't say much," Team Leader Park grinned and continued to say, "I think they're talking about how I said that our country will win at least four gold medals?"

“Hahahahahahaha! This is why I like you!” President Kang Taehoon laughed happily when he heard Park Minggyu’s words. He could already tell what transpired even if he was not there. After all, this was the reason why he trusted Park Minggyu more than anybody else.

But not long after, a shroud of darkness loomed over Kang Taehoon’s face. He said, “It’s not too bad. But, it would be nice if things really worked out the way you said it.”

Yes. It was a decent performance so far. South Korea had done enough to show the world that they were not the weak and helpless country that the other countries said they were. However, even if they became aware of the power of the individual players, in the end, *Athenae*: World War was still a competition. They were in a competition where they had to devise strategies and beat people that are stronger than them. But the Korean Team, with Minhyuk as their captain, was not showing any kind of strategy at all.

But then, Park Minggyusaid excitedly, “President, can’t you feel it?”

Kang Taehoon, who had turned off his microphone when he started talking with Minggyu, looked at him in doubt and said, “What are you talking about?”

“The Korean Team deliberately created a fight.”

“...?!”

Kang Taehoon finally realized that the other players were not keeping the Korean Team in check, rather, it was Minhyuk, Ali and Root that induced a fight.

But that was a very strange tactic. It made it difficult for them to score a goal as was reflected in the current rankings. So, why did they choose to do that?

Team Leader Park said, “President, you remember that I stayed in Player Minhyuk’s house for quite some time during the *Athenae*: Korean War, right?”

“Yes. I remember.”

“We talked a lot back then. And I found out that whenever Player Minhyuk does something, he will first run a simulation in his head.”

Kang Taehoon nodded. Professional gamers, athletes and players in reality did a lot of simulation training in their heads. Simulation training was a very helpful training.

“But, would you believe me if I told you that he runs hundreds of simulations in his head?”

“What?” President Kang Taehoon asked in surprise.

“Perhaps... he has already run hundreds of simulations of this ‘Penalty Shoot-Out’ in his head.”

Team Leader Park Minggyuk looked at Minhyuk.



“First, he drew the attention of everyone by easily scoring the ball. Then, he let Root take the golden ball to clash against Calauhel. And finally, what they are doing now...”

Sweat almost covered Team Leader Park’s forehead from the excitement as he continued to say, “Perhaps all of the participating countries and the viewers are playing into the palm of his hands.”

“...!”

President Kang Taehoon believed in Park Minggyu. After hearing his analysis, he also found something strange. Food God Minhyuk was not a fool, but it was an undeniable fact that he showed off to catch everyone’s attention in the first half and cause conflict.

Team Leader Park spoke firmly and confidently, “That player is a genius. And if he really is carrying out the ‘plan’ that I think he’s doing then...” He paused for a moment and continued, “... the gold medal will be ours.”

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The flow of the game went the way everyone expected it to flow, the American Team maintained their position in first place.

And just like that, the time for the ‘Golden Time’ was fast approaching. The Golden Time was the short twenty seconds before the end of the game where golden balls would rain down from the sky at a certain place. This was the perfect chance to turn the tables especially if the countries ranked first and second were only ten points apart.

Since the golden balls would fall in one area, the players started to gather together. The same was true for Alexander and James.

“Good job, Alexander! The gold medal is ours!”

Alexander chuckled at James’ words. He said, “We’re still not sure if we’ll get the gold medal. Don’t let your guard down, James.”

Right now, what they needed to do was to stop the players that wanted to score a goal with the golden balls. The one hundred surviving players had already gathered together in one place with one minute left to the game. All of them stopped fighting for a moment as they waited with bated breath, some even gulped to ease the dryness in their throats. Then, Alexander turned to look around.

*‘Where is he?’*

Where was Minhyuk, the player that showed a shocking display of power? Alexander turned until he saw him scoring regular balls in the distance. Alexander realized what he wanted to do.

*‘Are you trying to tell me that you will remain in the top ten?’*

Alexander admired them a bit. They did well enough to the point that his views about their country had been refreshed. And finally...

Flaaaash—

Flaaaaaash—

Flaaaaaash—

Flaaaaaaaaaash—

Dozens of golden balls flashing a brilliant light fell down from the sky. Alexander did not miss the chance.

[Ghost of the Battlefield.]

[Movement Speed will increase by 350% within a 30-meter radius.]

[Attack and Defense will increase by 30% within a 30-meter radius.]

This was the power that made Alexander the strongest. The moment the skill was triggered, an area with a thirty-meter radius would become his own battlefield.

Then, countless players leapt towards the golden balls falling from the sky. Some even used their AOE skills. But, it was useless in the face of Alexander, who had already turned into a ghost and was running in between them in his translucent state.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

“Keuaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaaaack!”

Alexander was so fast that the only thing that people could see were players spurting blood and falling down from the skies. Even the players trying to cast their AOE skills on the ground also collapsed with a spurt of blood. Everyone was shocked and terrified by Alexander’s ghostly movements. He was literally the embodiment of his name, the Ghost of the Battlefield. On the other hand, Alexander was delighted.

*‘The first gold medal...!’*

But something strange happened just as the thought flashed in his head. Two men covered with a bright and blinding light suddenly appeared in front of him. One of the men had golden hair and an aloof and noble air. This man was none other than Golden Mage Ali. The other man, the Food God, had short hair and a beautiful face. However, at this time, his eyes were as sharp as a hawk.

“Earth King’s Authority.”

“...!”

Alexander realized that something was wrong. Also, *‘King... King’s Authority?!’*

But before he could finish his thought...

“Worship.”

Thuuuuuuud—

...Alexander was already kneeling in worship before him. That was right. Worship. Alexander looked up only to see Minhyuk looking down at him. Then, he looked at the people around him. Hundreds of players all knelt down to worship Food God Minhyuk.

That was when Alexander felt fear and terror creep up his spine. King. The man in front of him was showing him the figure of a king as well as the power that he could not afford to fight against.

Tremble, tremble—

Alexander's body trembled both in shock and fear. And just like him, the entire world was shocked to see the players all kneeling down to worship the Food God, as if they were all equal in the face of his authority.

#### Chapter 414: Death's Performance

The Korean viewers in the audience all expressed their regrets as they watched the highlight of the second half begin.

"So the first place goes to America, huh?"

"But I think we'll be able to rank in the top ten, right?"

Everyone felt disappointed, but the outcome was already inevitable. Still, despite their disappointment, their lips were all curled up in a smile. They might not get the gold, but the three players from South Korea, a small country that most ignored, had made dozens of players flustered and at a loss. On top of that, the Food God had also successfully killed Calauhel, one of the Summit Five. In other words, their performance did not lag behind America's performance.

"South~ Korea!"

Clap, clap! Clap! Clap, clap!

"South~ Korea!"

Clap, clap! Clap! Clap, clap!

*'You did well. You look cool. We're proud of you!'*

These were the words that they wanted to convey to them. The Koreans in the crowd cheered loudly in hopes that their representatives would feel their heartfelt sincerity. By the time the 'Golden Time' arrived, the entire nation was already shouting with one voice.

"Ooh~ Ooooooooooh~ Ooh! Ooooooooooh~"

The Koreans, with the same mind and heart, shouted loudly and cheered for their representatives. Countless people across the country watched with rapt attention, waiting for the game to end. Everyone, including the people watching from their TVs at home with their families, to the people gathered in front of electronic displays, and even PD Kim Daeguk, who was watching together with the staff from various Korean broadcasting stations, all chewed their lips nervously.

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*'Player Minhyuk has always created miracles. Please...'*

PD Kim remembered all of the things that Minhyuk had achieved—the battle against the demon race, Vormon's hunt and many more!—he had created countless miracles. Even so, his current obstacle was in the form of America's Alexander, threatening to stop him from creating another miracle.

[Aaaaaaaaah! Alexander!!! He's prowling around the stadium as if he's telling the other players that he wouldn't let them get to the golden balls!]

[He's moving so fast that we can't even see him with our naked eyes!]

[America's strongest, Alexander, is showing us why he's called the best right here and now!!!]

[It seems like the Korean Team is hell-bent on scoring goals until the last minute. They look very determined in narrowing down the gap in the rankings.]

Just like PD Kim Daeguk, many players were gritting their teeth and waiting for a miracle. However, in the end, all they could do was sigh in pity at the medal that they would never have. Nevertheless, all of the Koreans present all felt the same way, '*Good job, Korea!!!*'

Feeling that nothing would change, PD Kim decided to get back to work. But, at that moment...

"Huh. HUUUUUUUUUH?! HUUUUUUUUUH!!!"

"What, what the hell?!"

Exclamations rang one after the other. PD Kim looked at them in confusion only to catch sight of the scene displayed on the huge TV screen. The representatives of each country were all kneeling in front of Minhyuk.

Bathump, bathump, bathump, bathump!

PD Kim Daeguk felt his heart thump wildly.

[The players are all kneeling down in worship to one player, and one player alone! They are all kneeling down in worship to Food God Minhyuk!]

[What kind of skill did he use?! This is very shocking! Even the person hailed as the strongest, Alexander, is also kneeling in front of him!!!]

[Alexander is looking at Player Minhyuk with shock!!!]

[The entire world watches as Player Minhyuk forced all of the surviving players to kneel down and submit to him!]

[Look at his dignified and noble aura! Ah! I feel a blazing flame sparking in my heart!]

[Yes! There's still hope. My fellow citizens, please don't give up! Pres... President Kang Taehoon! We still have hope! There are still fifteen seconds left before the game ends!!!]

The thunderous shouts and cheers of the Korean people rang loudly in the stadium.

[Fourteen seconds before the game ends.]

Everyone watching the scene clasped their hands tightly in tense anticipation. Meanwhile, the current rankings was:

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Minhyuk watched as the surviving players knelt before him, with confusion and disbelief all over their faces. Just like what Team Leader Park Minggyu had expected, Minhyuk had run hundreds of simulations in his head, until he came up with the perfect strategy.

Minhyuk's strategy involved taking advantage of the second half's 'Golden Time'. If they scored high in the beginning, the players would definitely target them. However, even if that was the case, they would not lose out. Their team would be able to score high during the first half, on top of being able to gain enough Authority Mana to use 'Earth King's Authority. Worship'.

The Authority Mana was a power that would accumulate the more Minhyuk fought. The conditions to accumulate Authority Mana was to deal damage to countless enemies, or fight against enemies that were far stronger than him.

However, under normal circumstances, even if he fought against countless opponents, Minhyuk judged that he would only be able to fill 30% of Authority Mana to trigger 'Earth King's Authority. Worship'. Furthermore, that would only trigger the most basic effect of Worship. Simply put, Minhyuk would only be able to force his enemies within an eight meter radius to kneel in worship.

On top of that, the length of time that they would stay kneeling would also depend on his luck. According to the skill's description, Minhyuk would be able to make opponents stronger than him kneel down to him in worship if he filled 100% of his Authority Mana.

But this was the World War, a competition where Minhyuk would fight countless strong opponents that he had never met before. It was the perfect opportunity for him to fill his Authority Mana. It grew exceedingly difficult to fill once it went past the 50% mark, but Minhyuk knew that it would not be too difficult to accomplish in this competition.

In other words, he would be able to show the greatest and strongest Worship on this stage, the World War.

So far, Mage Ali, Minhyuk, and Root had only shown the world their basic attacks, together with one skill in their arsenal. This was because they had been waiting for this moment.

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

[Your Authority Mana has reached 100%.]

[You can make stronger opponents kneel down to you in worship.]

[The radius and stun duration has increased.]

[All of your opponents within a fifteen meter radius will be forced to their knees.]

[The ones forced to their knees will be in a twelve second-stunned state.]

*'N... no way...!'*

Alexander and the other players finally felt the danger of the situation that they were in. Each of them used their skills to try and get out of their abnormal state. But...

[You can't nullify the abnormal state.]

[You will not be able to resist the power that is forcing you down to your knees.]

Cold sweat dripped down from Alexander's forehead. Then...

Boom—

Alexander could clearly see an archer standing slightly further away from him pulling the strings of his bow and targeting the golden ball that bounced once after falling down the ground. The bow in the archer's hand looked extraordinary. It was none other than 'Elf King Gorn's Great Bow'.

Since they contributed greatly during the reclamation of the Elven Forest, Let's Eat Sect was able to build a deep and strong connection with Elf King Gorn. Elf King Gorn's bow was a legendary artifact that could only be pulled by a being comparable to Gorn, someone that has also reached the realm of the legends.

Right now, this bow that Root had hidden deeply, finally appeared.

Stretch—

Elf King Gorn's Great Bow was a famous artifact, one that could not be pulled by anyone unless they were the chosen one. But slowly, ever so slowly, Root was able to pull the strings of the bow. The arrow that he used was also extremely huge. It was so huge that it was already comparable to a spear.

"Master Archer's Bullseye."

Thwaaaaaaack—

Root released his arrow. The arrow shone brightly like the dawn breaking through the darkness of the night. Master Archer's Bullseye was a skill with a hundred percent accuracy and a very shocking destructive power. The arrow that Root released struck the golden ball's 'red dot' right in the center.

Thump—

The golden ball flew fiercely as it passed through the nearest goal post even before the transparent shield could form.

Baaaaaaaang—

The tremendous force behind the ball destroyed the goal post. Then...

[Goaaaaaaaaaaaal!]

[Player Root has scored a golden ball!!!]

Everyone turned to look at the electronic display.

South Korea's ranking, which was at eleventh place, rose quickly. There were only nine seconds left in the game. Meanwhile, Ali had already finished all of his preparations. His golden hair and robe

fluttered, as he reached his palm out towards the goal posts that were spread out all over the place. Then, he clenched his palm into a fist and said, “Compress.”

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang!

Then, after gathering the goal posts together, Ali sent Diss to seven golden balls.

Thuuud—

Thuuud—

Thuuud—

Thud—

The tremendous force from Ali’s attack sent seven golden balls into a wild track. Thankfully, most of them flew towards the goal posts that he had gathered.

Thunk—

However, one of the golden balls slammed into the sides of one goal post and was thrown back out to the field while another glided past the goal post, only grazing its side. Only the last and final ball made the goal, the goal post shaking wildly from the impact.

Thuuuump—

[Goooooooooal!!!]

[It’s another goal!!! Ali scores another goal!!!]

[There are only a few seconds left before the game ends!!!]

Once again, everyone turned to look at the electronic display.

Everyone shook in nervousness. Meanwhile, Minhyuk, who everyone was still worshipping, jumped up in the sky and said, “Sword of Frenzy.”

A powerful force stretched out from the tip of his sword that stabbed one of the golden balls.

Baaaaaaang—

The golden ball powered by the force of Minhyuk’s Sword of Frenzy flew towards the goal post sharply. But, the shield was already up around the goal.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

However, the force that Minhyuk used to strike the ball was so strong that it spun fiercely even after colliding with the shield. And finally...

Clang!

The shield broke down into pieces and the ball flew inside the goal post.

All eyes were trained on Minhyuk as they sat on the edge of their seats. Even the commentators' were shouting loudly in trepidation to the point that they overwhelmed the crowd's shouts.

[Only three seconds!!! There are only three seconds left in the game!!!]

[In three seconds, the first game of Athenae: World War, the Penalty Shoot-Out, will end!]

However, at that moment, the power that bound Alexander and made him submit was released. Minhyuk quickly changed the words engraved in his Continent Destroyer Sword from Destruction to Explosion when he saw him break free. Now, there were only two seconds left. Minhyuk hurriedly swung his sword with all his might towards the golden ball lying in front of him.

*'Please!!!'*

If the passive skill Explosion did not get triggered, then there would not be enough force to drive the golden ball towards the goal post. However, at the same time Minhyuk landed a hit on the golden ball, he received Alexander's slash on his back.

One second left...

Baaaaaaaang—

A bloody lightning bolt fell down from the sky and struck the golden ball in front of Minhyuk. A huge explosion erupted and made it fly towards the goal post.

Slash—

Minhyuk, who received an attack from Alexander, collapsed while vomiting blood.

Baaaaaaaang—

He had no time to check the result of his shot. He only heard the sound of the ball making contact with the goal post from the ground.

Thud—

And zero.

Minhyuk turned to look at the goal post as the ball spun fiercely and went inside the net. And the rankings...

## Chapter 415: Death's Performance

The cheering audience suddenly turned mute the moment the electronic board displayed the final rankings of each country, as well as the medalists! Up until that point, everyone believed that the



American Team would clinch the Penalty Shoot-Outs' gold medal. After all, there was only a minute left in the game. However, within that short time frame, the situation was reversed and the country that won the gold medal was not America, but South Korea!

“Wo... woaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!”

The audience, who went silent for a moment, finally broke out into loud cheers and shouts. The Americans in the audience were all holding their heads in disbelief and frustration, the Japanese stared at the electronic display in a daze, while some just let out dejected laughs. However, no matter their reactions, one thing was certain. Korea won the gold medal.

[South... South Korea's gold medal has just been confirmed!!! Everyone! Korea has won the gold medal in the very first event!!!]

President Kang Taehoon, a special commentator, jumped up from his seat and shouted loudly. He was shouting so loudly that the veins on his neck popped up.

All eyes were still focused on the representative teams, who could not hide their surprise, and the Korean Team standing in the middle of the stadium. That was when they saw Alexander stand up and approach the Korean Team.

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Ghost of the Battlefield Alexander felt extremely frustrated when he saw the rankings displayed in the electronic board. The very first game was the event with the most participants and the event that everyone was most excited about. Somehow, America lost the gold medal to South Korea, only taking home the silver medal.

*‘Are you telling me that we played into the palm of his hands?’*

Alexander watched as Minhyuk, the captain of the Korean Team, hugged Ali and Root, cheering happily together. For a moment, he felt both anger and frustration. However, not long after, his thoughts changed.

*‘Amazing.’*

What kind of existence was Alexander? He was hailed as the strongest in one of the greatest Athenae powerhouse, America. He acknowledged Minhyuk and his strength. No, to be exact...

*‘I'm scared.’*

...he was afraid of him. There were plenty of games left in this competition, and various anomalies and variables would appear during each game. These anomalies and variables could turn an easy situation into a very terrifying one.

Alexander approached Minhyuk in curiosity and disbelief. The people around them gulped nervously as they watched the two face off. No, the entire world was in fact paying attention to the rising powerhouse, Minhyuk, and Athenae's strongest, Alexander. Not long after, Alexander reached his hand out for a handshake.

“I’m looking forward to your performance in the upcoming games.”

Minhyuk looked at the hand that reached out to him for a moment before grabbing it and...

“Look forward to it.”

...tightening his grip. Alexander chuckled.

[America’s Strongest Alexander and South Korea’s Food God Minhyuk are shaking hands.]

[This is what they mean when they say fair competition and rivalry. Ah, just looking at this scene is enough to make anyone smile!]

The entire world admired the scene where these two people shook hands amiably. The scene of the two of them, one that wanted to rise in power, and one who wanted to defend their throne, shaking hands was very heartwarming. That was how the first event of the very first World War ended.

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Athenae: World War, Day Two.

America had proven to the world why they were called an Athenae powerhouse. Even though they lost to South Korea during the Penalty Shoot-Out game and only won a silver medal, they were able to win three gold medals on the same day. The total tally of the medals that they gained on the first day were three gold medals, three silver medals, and one bronze medal.

What about South Korea? After winning the gold medal in the first game, they secured another two gold medals, bringing their total to three. But after that, they were not able to secure any more medals.

On the eve of the second day, the Korean community sites were all filled with questions.

[Who in the world is Player Death? Who is he to suddenly join the Korean Team?]

[Death is a player that everyone knows little about. There are plenty of rumors about him but they are all baseless. However, there’s one thing that we’re certain about. He’s a necromancer.]

[Who in the world does not know that he’s a necromancer? That’s why everyone is wondering why Death participated in the ‘Summoner’s Great War’.]

Only one player was allowed from each of the participating countries to fight in the Summoner’s Great War. This event would be held in a huge field where participants would be given a bracelet. The bracelet was none other than the ‘Ruler’s Bracelet’. The destruction of the bracelet would result in the participant’s disqualification from the game, while the ones that could destroy plenty of these bracelets would gain special privileges.

Simply put, the bracelets could strengthen the summoner’s abilities or increase their MP. On top of that, the player that destroyed the opponent’s Ruler’s Bracelet would be able to gain their opponent’s abilities once they had been logged out of the game. The final three players left in the field would win the gold, silver, and bronze respectively.

This was where the issue laid...

[Everyone knows that a necromancer is the weakest class in the summoner category, right? So, what the hell were they thinking when they let him participate?]

That was right. The necromancer was the weakest class among all of the summoner classes. This was mainly because the summons that the necromancer could call for were very weak. The participants from the other participating countries had summons of varying ranks, from Epic to Legendary.

But, a necromancer?

The current official global number one necromancer, Jack, could only summon three Death Knights at most. Were these three Death Knights powerful?

The answer was no.

The Death Knights that he could summon were incredibly lacking in front of the monsters that the best summoners could summon. This was because the undead had literally died, which meant that the power that they could exert were just 80% of the power when they were still living. The 20% loss in power was enough to cause them a huge disadvantage.

Unlike what was depicted in most novels, a necromancer gaining victory through numbers with the undead was an impossible feat in *Athenae*. From what they knew, Necromancer Jack could no longer summon any other undead after he summoned the three Death Knights under his disposal.

It was because of this that everyone judged that the necromancer class would not be able to do much in the Summoner's Great War. Even the game's 'rule' posed a great problem. The rule where they could gain special privileges if they destroyed plenty of Ruler's Bracelets.

Naturally, most of the players would go for the easiest target and try to attack Death, a necromancer, to destroy his bracelet. In other words, Death, or Jung Ji-Hoon, was just an easy prey in that huge field.

Currently, this very same person that everyone was talking about was sitting and waiting in the players' waiting room for the game that would start in ten minutes. He was holding something tightly to his chest and his eyes were red. The other participating players looked at him and whispered to each other.

"Is he crying?"

"Maybe he's crying because he's scared to play? Pffft."

"His gloomy and dark aura really fits his necromancer class."

Some of the representatives felt that he was dull and dim-witted, so they laughed and mocked him. That was on top of people from all over the world questioning and mocking his abilities.

There were two decisive reasons for their mockery and disregard of Death. One, half of his face was covered in a mask. There would definitely be people who had bad intentions. They would mock, criticize and dig into other people's pain. It was especially worse for the people that came from other countries. Plenty of them wanted to mock Ji-Hoon for having a huge burn on half of his face. And two, he had acted in a strange manner yesterday, during *Athenae: World War's* first day.

Most of the time, he had looked left and right with a scared look on his face and could not even raise his head. It was as if he had some kind of mental disability with how weird he acted. He was the textbook example of a weak person. That was why everyone wanted to trample him even more.

However, unlike yesterday, he only stared in front while hugging something unknown. But then...

“Hey, monster bastard. Take that mask of yours off.”

...someone that went a bit overboard passed by. Death's poker face broke for a moment before going back to how it was. The man that mocked Death had long blonde hair. This man was none other than Bastien, France's official number one summoner, and the global official number one summoner.

The main reason why he taunted and mocked Death was because he was one of Blackstone's executives, and was Calauhel's de facto right-hand man. The fact that he was the global official number one summoner made him the strongest candidate to win this game. All of the players of this event had great admiration for him, mostly because he could summon two legendary monsters.

That was not all. He could also summon more than a hundred unique and epic monsters at the same time. His existence was akin to the summoner world's king.

Bastien looked at Death and laughed, “Hey, monster bastard, are your ears not working? Take off your mask.”

“...”

Death maintained his silence. The other players knew that Death was a complete underdog. After all, they did not have any data on him. However, perhaps it was because he did not have any feat that made him famous, or perhaps it was because he could not speak at all and was releasing a pathetic aura, that they felt that there was no way that such a man could do something.

“Then, I will take off that mask for y...”

Just when Bastien was about to touch Death's mask...

“Participants, please enter your capsules!!!”

...the officials announced the start of the game. Bastien sneered as he walked to his capsule. Ji-Hoon ignored him and just silently entered his own capsule.

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[Athenae: World War's Summoner's Great War is now starting, with a more impressive and hotter bang than any other games!!!]

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!!!”

Loud and fiery cheers erupted from the stands as dozens of dragons, which they placed as an event, flew to the skies and breathed fire to set off fireworks that marked the beginning of the Summoner's Great War. And with that, dozens of contestants appeared together with the huge field.

The Summoner class was well known for summoning or taming monsters! The participants quickly dispersed, running to take advantage of the huge field's terrain.

“Kiheeeeeeeeeek!”

Some of the summoners quickly summoned their aerial monsters and used them to fly up in the sky. Now that they were wearing the Ruler's Bracelet, they realized that they had to protect it from the

very beginning! And just like that, the summoners revealed the summons that they were very proud of one after the other.

[The dragon of the sea, the Turtle Dragon has appeared! It's known for its ridiculous defense!]

[The Ogre Troll that reaches as high as nine meters has also appeared. Its master, Matsumoto, climbs on its shoulder and looks down on the other players.]

[Summoner Nick, the Emperor of the Skies, has already occupied the skies with his dozens of wyverns. He's even standing on the back of a Wyvern King!]

[Our impressive summoners have called out their most powerful summons one after another, bringing in more heat to our already fiery stadium!!!]

And Bastien, who stood among them, hurriedly looked around to find Death's location.

*'I'll kill you first, you bastard.'*

Although he had received instructions from Calauhel, Bastien was willing to do it even without one. This was because he found Death's existence an eyesore. He wanted to ridicule and humiliate him. Besides, he was convinced Death was already living a pathetic life, so he wanted to push him off the cliff. Bastien was such a man. Then, he called out for his summons.

[You have summoned the Siren's Knight.]

[You have summoned the King's Guardian.]

He summoned exactly two of them. But the impact that these two could bring was immense. He summoned a knight that had protected the siren for hundreds of years. Its level was said to be around Level 550.

But was that all? No. The King's Guardian was a monster created to protect the king of Italei Kingdom. It looked similar to humans, but had a far superior speed and destructive power than them. With its level around Level 530, it boasted a ridiculous amount of strength. And it did not even end there, as more monsters continued to appear one after the other around Bastien. It was his Epic and Unique monster corps! Their momentum was so strong that it brought an immense amount of pressure to all the players present.

[The... the strongest summoner corps has appeared! This is the global official number one summoner, Bastien!!!!]

Several summoners had tried to attack Death. However, Death was Bastien's prey. The Siren's Knight and King's Guardian swiftly rushed forward and approached Death. Everyone believed that Death, who looked grim with his long black hair and ragged robes, would eventually be deprived of his Ruler's Bracelet. Swiftly, the Siren's Knight's sword stabbed Death in the chest. But at that moment...

"Death Knight Summon. Varda."

Claaaaaaaaaang—

A bolt of black current fell down from the sky only to reveal a Death Knight. One swing from the Death Knight and the Siren's Knight's attack was nullified.

[It's... it's a Death Kniiiiiiight!]

[It's the same undead knight that the global official number one necromancer, Jack, can only summon three of!]

Bastien frowned at the sight. But Death did not stop there.

"Death Knight Summon. Ondoan."

"Death Knight Summon. Baroque."

"Death Knight Summon. Kiara."

"Death Knight Summon. Black."

"Death Knight Summon. Gerpin."

"Death Knight Summon. Amber."

"Death Knight Summon. Ilrod."

"...Wh... what?!"

"What the hell?! Are you kidding me?!"

Dozens of bolts of black currents fell down from the sky, as one Death Knight appeared after the other. They all lined up and knelt down on one knee in front of Death. He looked back at the other players coldly and...

"Kingdom of Death."

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

The ground twisted and cracked as thousands of undead broke through and crawled up. Each and every single one of them were wearing armor and holding weapons. Gigantic bones sprang up from the ground and created a small kingdom. A long red carpet rolled out as the gates to this kingdom opened. At the other end of the red carpet was a throne made entirely out of bones.

"Im... impossible...!"

"Ho... how..."

Everyone, including the participants and the viewers, were left speechless at the sight. Death summoned his black staff and slowly walked past the speechless players.

Step, step—

Finally, he sat down on his throne. The hood of his robe fell down as he leaned back, revealing his smooth forehead. Then, he crossed his legs and leisurely placed his black staff on his chest before looking down at his opponents. His gaze was both piercing and indifferent, as if he was looking at someone 'insignificant'.

Meanwhile, Bastien thought, *'He, he summoned fifteen Death Knights...?!'* He was so shocked that he lost his words and even forgot to breathe.

Then, Death looked at Bastien and said, "What the hell are you f\*cking looking at, dumb\*ss?"

Death completely overwhelmed Bastien with a string of curses.

## Chapter 416: Death's Performance

Thirty minutes before the Summoner's Great War began.

Ji-Hoon, with his head down, sat in a corner of the players' waiting room sipping his water and peeking from one side to the other.

"Hyung, look at this! Euryaaaaaaaaa! Frieeeeeeeeeeend!"

Black Mage Ali, or Yoon Ji-Hoo, was showing Yoon Ji-Seok a video of One Diss on his phone. And his hyung was smiling widely as if to tell him that he was very happy.

On the other side, Locke, or Jisoo, "No. Mom, Dad!!! Don't come to the players' waiting room. Ah~ wait! What in the world is that shirt you're wearing?!"

Jisoo was very shocked. His parents and sister, who looked just like him, were all wearing a shirt that said: 'Locke Love!'

"Jisoo! Fighting!"

"Our son is the most handsome man in the entire stadium!"

A moment of silence passed in the players' waiting room after hearing Jisoo's mother's words. However, it immediately became lively once again. Everyone was free to come and go in the Athenae's waiting room. It would only be strictly guarded and controlled before the start of each game.

Ji-Hoon sat alone in this lively waiting room. He had always been a loner. He thought, '*I feel jealous.*'

Ji-Hoon was jealous of the red-faced Locke who was looking at the shirt that his family was wearing. He also felt the same thing when he looked at Yoon Ji-Hoo and Yoon Ji-Seok. The same was true when he saw one of the players crying over the phone while talking with their family. Envy brewed in his heart but he kept his head down and only peeked at them. Then, someone approached him and said, "What are you doing here all alone?"

"...Eh? Yes, what? Huh?" When Ji-Hoon raised his head, he saw Minhyuk and his father, Kang Minhoo, standing in front of him. Ji-Hoon lowered his head even more after seeing Kang Minhoo, one of the bigshots, from nervousness.

Kang Minhoo smiled and said, "Minhyuk, is this the friend that you were talking about before?"  
"Yep. That's right, dad."

"Hohoho," Kang Minhoo laughed when he heard his son's words.

Ji-Hoon lowered his head even further. He felt his heart thump when he heard one word. And that word was... '*Friend.*'? This was the term that Minhyuk used to introduce Jung Ji-Hoon to his father, Kang Minhoo.

"Jung Ji-Hoon."

"Yes, uh, yes, sir?" Ji-Hoon looked up at Minhoo, however his eyes kept on dodging to the sides. Ji-Hoon had been cut off from society for a long time, on top of that, he was

still reeling from the trauma of being bullied when he was younger. Because of that, he developed extreme fear of interacting with others.

Kang Minhoo looked at him for quite a while before saying, “You’ll definitely shine brilliantly soon, like an unearthed jewel showing its brilliance to the world.”

“What?” Ji-Hoon asked dumbly, unknowingly making eye contact with Kang Minhoo. He could see the sincerity in the man’s eyes. Minhoo chuckled before patting Ji-Hoon on the shoulder and stepping out of the room. This was the first time that Ji-Hoon had felt something like this in his life. Then, he turned to Minhyuk and asked, “Why are you helping me?”

“...When did I do that?”

“...”

Minhyuk had no choice but to cough in embarrassment when he saw the earnest gaze that Ji-Hoon gave him. He just told Ji-Hoon to find him ten times and die ten times, and he really did that. Ji-Hoon was the one that had begun to change himself after realizing a lot of things through Minhyuk’s letters, he did not do much for him.

Still, Minhyuk looked at Ji-Hoon’s eyes for a moment before saying, “It’s because I think that you can change.”

“...”

Ji-Hoon fell silent at his words. However, he thought differently. The world threw curses at Minhyuk yet he was able to overcome the pain brought by his eating addiction, a pain that was far more painful than the pain that he was feeling, and even tried to protect him.

“Ah. Here, take this,” Minhyuk said while handing over a note to Ji-Hoon. The note had a string of numbers written on it.

“...What’s this?”

Minhyuk smiled at Ji-Hoon’s question and said, “This is your gift for coming to find me ten times. This is Kennedy’s number. He’s a world-famous burn specialist. My father already talked to him so you can get treated after your game.”

Kennedy was a world-renowned burn specialist, an authoritative doctor in his field, and a person that Ji-Hoon could not meet even once in his life, despite having countless assets and money under his name. In fact, Ji-Hoon wanted to meet with him but as time went by, the world changed and he grew more isolated from society. At some point, he just gave up on getting treatment.

Ji-Hoon’s pupils shook wildly when he heard Minhyuk’s words. The words of the announcement broadcasted over the speaker registered weakly in his ears as Minhyuk punched him lightly on his shoulder.

[All participants for the Summoner’s Great War, please proceed to the waiting room.]

Then, Minhyuk told him, “Now’s the time for you to take that leap and change.”



Ji-Hoon nodded silently. Not long after, one of the Athenae staff approached him and escorted him to the waiting room. He walked behind the staff through the crowded hallway while clutching the note that Minhyuk handed to him on his chest. In the end, he burst out in tears.

Jisoo looked at Ji-Hoon suspiciously as he stepped out of the room. He asked, "I don't understand why you're going so far for him. Is that guy even reliable?"

Everyone was free to have opinions of their own about a person. Some of the members definitely did not see Ji-Hoon in a good light. Then, Ali, or Yoo Jin-Hoo said, "But I think he's a good person?"

Minhyuk smiled lightly and said, "It's alright. It only took one call from my dad to get Kennedy's phone number."

Yes, that was right. It was something easy for Minhyuk to achieve. However, that single call was enough to completely change a person's life in the future.

"Besides. That's what he worked hard for himself."

Minhyuk listened to the crowd's loud cheers that signaled the start of the Summoner's Great War. Then, he said, "He's the perfect ally and..."

Minhyuk looked at everyone in the room and continued to say, "...friend."

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[Even, even though it's happening in front of me, I still can't bring myself to believe it...!]

[Are you seeing this? He summoned fifteen Death Knights! And that's not the end of it, he even created a small kingdom of bones. Correct me if I'm wrong but I think there are liches around the kingdom that he created.]

[Right now, in Athenae: World War, the player named Death has brought shock to the entire world.]

[Look at Death's aloof gaze. His sharp and cold gaze looks similar to a leopard's eyes! It was just yesterday, during the Korean group photoshoot when we saw Death fidgeting around and lowering his head in anxiety. There were even many people concerned about his anxiety and restlessness. Is he really the same person as the one from yesterday? He's giving off a completely different vibe.]

[You're absolutely right. His aloof gaze makes him look like a king that looks down on the other players! He's literally the King of Death!]

Death placed one hand on his chest, to that place where he placed the note that Minhyuk had given him earlier. It was not there right now, but the warmth that it gave him still lingered in his heart, giving him the courage to change himself.

*'This is the only thing that I can do to repay him for what he has given me.'*

The thing that Death could do for Minhyuk was to change, just like what he told him earlier. For the first time in a long time, he wanted to throw away the dirty and gloomy robe that he was wearing and let the world see how he could shine brightly.

*'Those that curse and mock me? Laugh and curse at me all you want. I will stand up and overtake you with my head held high.'*

Then, at that moment...

“Keuhahahahahaha!” Bastien burst into laughter.

Death, who was sitting on his throne, slightly lowered his head and looked coldly at the laughing Bastien. Bastien looked at him proudly, as though he had seen through his act.

“This is amazing. Really amazing! It seems like you’re also a big shot. That’s completely unlike what we expected!”

Bastien could tell that Death far surpassed the global official number one necromancer, Jack, in terms of power and abilities. Then, he looked at the players trembling in fear. He said, “What are you afraid of, huh?! Pull your shit together! These people, *tch*. This is a competition. What can one bastard who shows off his amazing summons and gets the spotlight in the start of the game do? Can he even beat forty of us by himself? Huh?!”

“...So, that’s the case.”

“Moron. Kekeke,” Bastien mumbled, firmly believing that Death was as dumb and foolish as ever. This was because they, the majority, were a total of forty people while Death was all by himself. Putting on a spectacular display of power would just light a fire in everyone. Someone as skilled and powerful as Death was definitely ‘someone that could never win a gold medal’. Death could not argue with anyone, he brought it upon himself. No matter how strong he was or how many undead he could summon, he would be of no match against forty powerful summoners altogether.

But Death just looked down at them from his throne as if he found them amusing. He said, “Is that so?”

The players burst out in a fit of laughter when they heard Death’s words. What could he do when they had Bastien, the global official number one summoner with them? It would not be too late for them to fight against each other once they dealt with and robbed Death of his Ruler’s Bracelet. Dozens of players were looking at Death and his relaxed smile. Bastien thought that Death should be feeling antsy right now.

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The audience, the various community sites from all over the world and even the commentators admired Death and his splendid appearance. However, they also lamented his brilliance.

[Player Death’s splendid appearance sparked a fire in the hearts of his opponents. It seems like the game would turn into a 40:1 fight.]

[If Player Death chose to hide his power and summoned his Death Knights step by step then he would definitely have secured the gold medal. But his pride and arrogance have driven himself into a crisis.]

Murmur, murmur—

The audience was in a buzz. The Koreans among them cheered loudly, delighted at the fact that Death, someone from their country, had reached the apex of summoners. However, they felt pity

and disappointment after watching him make foolish actions one after the other. Even the Korean representatives sitting in the player's stand were lamenting his defeat.

"With the situation as it is, he's already doomed."

"How can someone beat forty people by himself?"

Their voices rang loudly, but Minhyuk just looked upfront and watched Death on the screen with a smile on his face.

"Death has won this fight."

"Huh?" Locke felt that Death was already going to lose, so he turned to look at Minhyuk in doubt.

Then, Minhyuk turned to him and said, "Death has already set up the board. You know, that guy is a genius gamer."

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The summoners stood in line, waiting for Bastien's orders. Then, Bastien said, "Turtle Dragon! Since you have a high defense, go and take the lead. Push the ones blocking the front away! While you're at it, we'll be dealing with the mobs loitering around that castle-like place!"

Bastien's order was reasonable. Although the Turtle Dragon was a turtle-shaped monster, it was very quick on its feet. On top of that, it had a ridiculous amount of defense that even the best of rankers would find it hard to chip the tough shell covering its body. In just a blink, Bastien's summons and the other players' summons had gathered together in one place.

Just then, Bastien felt something was wrong.

"Hey, Lacarie! Hurry up and make your Turtle Dragon move!"

"...Why does it have to be my Turtle Dragon? There are a lot of other monsters here, too."

Bastien frowned. Everyone here knew that the Turtle Dragon had the highest defense on top of a tremendous amount of HP. But even so, why should it be the Turtle Dragon? But if the owner did not want it, then so be it.

"Then, Matsumoto. Take the vanguard!"

"...I don't want to. My Ogre Troll is not as sturdy and tough as the Turtle Dragon."

Bastien's brows furrowed even deeper as he listened to the other players.

"Why don't you want to take the lead?"

"If I become the vanguard then my Turtle Dragon and I will be the first to get eliminated, right?"

"Are you just going to give orders and stay at the rear? Why? Just so you can reduce your losses?"

“Th... then what about the Wyvern Corps? How about we burn them down with the Wyvern Corps first...?!”

“My Wyvern Corps can’t do it either. Their HP is too low for that.”

Bastien realized that something was very wrong when he heard the commotion among the other players. Yes, anyone, even if they were a fool, knew that they would lose a lot of power if they took the lead. And even if they killed Death, they would still eventually be forced to log out.

“Pfft. Kekekekekeke. Kikikikiki. Kihihihihih!” Death’s grating laughter rang loudly over their voices.

Bastien suddenly turned pale. That laugh told him that Death had already predicted this situation. Death’s laughter continued to ring in the field. Even the commentators and the audience sitting in the stands finally started to realize that the situation was taking an unusual turn.

[If they follow Bastien’s orders, those that clash against the undead legion will incur a huge amount of damage and be eliminated.]

[That’s why they’re all trying to point fingers at each other. Truth is, I overlooked this fact until now. But it seems like Death has predicted that this would happen.]

[If that’s the case, then he’s a very clever player. We can expect Player Death to bring forth a new and fresh wind in Athenae.]

But unbeknownst to them, Death was already a step ahead of them.

“Ah. That’s right,” Death laughed for a moment before looking down at Bastien and saying coldly, “Did you forget that you’re as much of a threat to them as I am?”

Bastien, who felt suffocated at Death’s words, looked around. The main reason why the field for the Summoner’s Great War was so large was to allow the summoners to make full use of their summons’ attributes and utilize the terrain’s characteristics. Bastien also knew this fact.

Right now, the summoners and their summons were lined up one after the other. And just like Bastien, the other summoners also started to realize this fact.

Then, Death raised his pointer finger and said, “How about I make you a deal? I will not make a move on you while you’re fighting Bastien.”

A vein popped up in Bastien’s forehead. He shouted, “Bastard, what are you trying...!”

But before he could finish his sentence, the other players started to agree with Death.

“Isn’t that a good deal?”

“I must agree. It sounds very tempting.”

“Let’s first deal with Bastien, then deal with Death. After that, the rest of us will fight after that. Death looks like someone that keeps his word.”

Bastien felt his breath get stuck in his throat. He could tell after seeing Death giggling while sitting snugly on his throne, that he was hunting him without even lifting a single finger.

“Kekekekekeke! Keuhahahahahaha. Hihihihihhi!”

Fear and terror crept up Bastien’s spine when he saw Death’s vicious smile. He finally realized that he provoked someone that he should not have touched.

Chapter 417: Death’s Performance

Bastien felt his head turn blank as he watched the summoners surround him for an attack. He could already tell that the booing and mockery from the French spectators would tarnish his honor, and even Calauhel’s, since he was working as his right-hand man. The disgrace that he would feel from Death literally sitting there without lifting a finger to deal with him would be tremendous.

“You bastaaaaaard! Bastaaaaaard!” Bastien roared in anger. But at that moment, the Ogre Troll slammed its ax down on him.

Baaaaaaang—

The two-meter King’s Guardian equipped with a full-plate armor and a helmet appeared in front of Bastien with a huge greatsword in hand to block the Ogre Troll’s ax.

“Everyone, stand back!”

“We have to deal with Bastien first!”

One of the summoners sent out their Orc Great Mage, which brandished its staff and flew up in the sky.

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

A huge magic spell fell down and engulfed Bastien and his summons.

“Attack!!!”

“Wyverns!!! Focus on attacking!”

The summoners sent one fierce attack after the other. However, Bastien was not known as the summoners’ king for nothing. He not only had two legendary monsters, he also commanded hundreds of epic and unique monsters.

“Keuhaaaaaaaack!”

Gigantic beasts sprang up from the ground and surrounded Bastien. He did not call for all of his summons, only the gigantic leopards and hyenas. Their bodies reached four meters in height and their entire body was shining brightly, as if they were wearing armor. They were the epic monsters: ‘Steel Leopard’ and ‘Hyena of Death’, monsters that lived in the Sky of Death. Bastien had tamed these monsters and created a small army of his own. And with their power, these monsters were not something that his enemies could take for granted.

“Keuhaaaaaaaack!”

“Keuhaaaaaaaack!”

The beast-type monsters jumped up and bit the Ogre Troll. The Siren’s Knight also took advantage of the split second when the wyverns would swoop down to attack and cut them down. Yes. They

were literally even in terms of power. Bastien might be fighting a bloody battle alone, but he was not losing his ground against dozens of players.

Baaaaaaaang—

Bastien personally slashed the head of one of the wolf-type monsters rushing towards him with an ax. It was not easy for his enemies to deal damage to him, but it was different for the other players. However, there was one obvious reason why they still tried to attack Bastien with all their might, despite knowing that they would suffer great damage in the process. This was because unlike Death, Bastien was within their reach. The problem was that Bastien went beyond their expectations and fought fiercely against them.

“Hing, hing, hing!”

“Heeeeeeeeng!”

“Keuhaaaaaaack!”

Bastien started to get pushed back as his summons started to collapse and fade to gray. However, the other players also suffered significant losses. Bastien was able to kill at least ten monsters on his own.

“He’s just one guy, we can take him down!!!”

The fight between Bastien and the other players continued. By the time their battle reached its peak, around 40% of the total number of summoners had disappeared. Bastien had no choice but to hide behind his summons the moment his Siren’s Knight and King’s Guardian reached their limits and were unable to fight. He knew that he would last for another minute at most, but at least he was able to take down a lot of people with him.

“Keukeukeukeukeu!”

And once again, another wild and menacing laughter rang loudly in the stadium. The bleeding Bastien, who was supporting himself with his ax, turned to look at the direction of the laughter. There, he saw Death still sitting on his throne. However, something has changed from earlier. A bloody red energy crept up and surrounded his small kingdom. Hundreds of plants then sprouted. And instead of flowers, the plants had spears and arrows.

Fwoooosh—

Fwoooosh—

Fwoooosh—

Dozens of arrows flew out from the plants. The Siren’s Knight and the King’s Guardian squeezed their last power to block the incoming arrows. However, there were still a few arrows that got past them and struck Bastien’s body.

“Keuaaaaaack! You coward!!! Didn’t you say that you wouldn’t lay a finger on us while we’re fighting?!”

Death had made a promise in front of the world, but he broke his own promise and attacked Bastien. Death tilted his head at Bastien as he reiterated the words that he uttered earlier, “You’re talking

about the words: *‘How about I make you a deal? I will not make a move on you while you’re fighting Bastien.’*, right? But I was talking to ‘them’ and not you. You aren’t included in that deal, you know?”

“...!”

Indeed, the ones that interpreted it freely were Bastien and the other players. Death never said that he would not make a move against Bastien. With the addition of what seemed to be poisoned arrows, Bastien’s death was fast approaching. But before he faded into gray, Bastien was given another shock. He shot his mouth off saying that he would take another guy with him and he really did take down a lot of players. But the problem?

*‘It... it increased Death’s chances of winning...!’*

Bastien, although unwilling, became Death’s puppet and moved according to his will and helped him deal with his opponents. It brought a bitter taste to his mouth. It was extremely hateful. Finally, Bastien turned gray and disappeared from everyone’s sight. And Death, who sent the final blow, was recognized as the one that destroyed Bastien’s Ruler’s Bracelet.

[You have destroyed a Ruler’s Bracelet.]

[Bastien’s Ruler’s Bracelet remains unused. His bracelet has three Summon Strengthening Decrees, two Summon Healing Decrees, and a 20% HP and MP Recovery for All Summons Decree.]

[You have destroyed an unused bracelet. The privilege hidden in the destroyed bracelet will be added to your own bracelet.]

[The Ruler’s Bracelet’s ability will take ten seconds to be applied. In the case of an attack, the time will be reset.]

Bastien had killed a lot of players, which meant that he had destroyed countless Ruler’s Bracelets and gained plenty of abilities. However, he was not given the opportunity to use all of the abilities that he gained. After all, he was struggling to avoid the other players’ attacks. But considering the pitiful amount of abilities left in his bracelet, it seemed like Bastien was still able to use quite a lot of them.

However, it did not matter, as all of the abilities that he had gathered were left to Death. It was like killing two birds with one stone. On top of that, Bastien and Death were in completely different circumstances. Bastien was under siege, while Death was sitting alone in his kingdom.

Then, Death used the bracelet’s powers.

[You have used the Ruler’s Bracelet’s power to strengthen Death Knight Ondoan.]

[Ondoan’s attack and defense will increase by 8% and his HP and MP will increase by 5%.]

[You have used the Ruler’s Bracelet’s power to strengthen Death Knight Baroque.]

[Baroque’s attack and defense will increase by 8% and his HP and MP will increase by 5%.]

[You have used the Ruler’s Bracelet...omitted.]

Death strengthened his Death Knights just like that. At first, this game looked disadvantageous for one player being attacked by a group of enemies, but reality was different.

What would happen if Death continued to take his opponents' bracelets to strengthen his army? And what if, unlike Bastien, he could freely use these bracelets, since he was not subjected to his enemies' siege? Then, his chances of winning would increase even further.

Death was also really smart. While they were busy fighting against each other, he silently used the 'Kingdom of Death's Wrath'. The skill's casting time was very long, it actually needed fifteen minutes before it could be casted. He would not be able to use it right away with encroaching enemies, but once he successfully cast it, it would be able to make his Kingdom of Death stronger.

Death had also used another of his abilities and spread it around his Kingdom of Death. It was none other than the 'Death Zone', the same ability that he used in his fight against Minhyuk in the past. It could restrict anyone and everyone from using their skills, as long as they were inside its area of effect. He even used the buff skill 'Undead's Evil Energy', a skill exclusive to necromancers that could be used in battle. He had strengthened all of his weapons ahead of his fight.

Now, everyone's target had finally changed from Bastien to Death. But even if that was the case, they would not be able to do anything. After all, Death had already strengthened himself as much as he could.

"Slaughter them."

Baaaaaaaang—

Following his command, Death Knight Baroque moved at the speed of light and cut down the summons and its owner. And just like that, another Ruler's Bracelet had been destroyed.

[You have destroyed a Ruler's Bracelet.]

[You have destroyed two bracelets and will receive a special privilege. You have acquired a 50% HP and MP Recovery Decree.]

In fact, the management had set a ten second casting time for each of the special privileges that the player would get to prevent one player from destroying and hogging plenty of Ruler's Bracelets. However, Death was already in a place where his opponents could not touch him easily.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

"Keuaaaaack!"

"Keuhaaaaaaaaaack!"

"Urk, Uaaaaaaaaaack!"

The undead slaughtered the summons and their owners mercilessly, destroying their Ruler's Bracelets, while Death reaped the special privileges.

"Strengthen, recover, strengthen, recover! Kikikikiki!"

Death instantly recovered the Death Knights with significantly lower HP and MP. He also further strengthened the already overwhelmingly powerful Death Knights. Even if Death was already powerful, some of the summoners would use their special skills, sending their summons near the Kingdom of Death. However, once they did so, a terrifying notification would ring in their ears and bring them deeper to the depths of despair.



[Your summons have stepped into the Death Zone.]

[All skills cannot be used.]

The good thing about having a named monster for a summon was that they had skills on their own. But once these monsters stepped into the Kingdom of Death, they would just be turned into monsters slightly stronger than ordinary mobs in terms of attack and defense. These monsters then became prey to the undead prowling around the Kingdom of Death.

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

Another wolf-type summon had been killed once again. The plants growing around the strengthened kingdom started to attack Death’s enemies. And just like always, Death...

“Strengthen, recover, strengthen, recover!”

However, none of them could accuse Death of being cowardly. After all, Death was all by himself while they were fighting him with their numbers. Besides, Death might have vowed to make a change, but he was never interested in playing the hero. What he wanted to do was to sprint forward and aim for a brilliant future.

Even so, the summoners still represented their own countries. In other words, they were very strong! They tried to enter Death’s kingdom by using a systematic approach and knocking down one undead after another. But as if he was waiting for them, Death opened his mouth and said, “Resurrection of the Dead.”

Crack, crack, crack!

Craaaaaaack!

Crack, crack, crack, craaaaack!

Death resurrected the summons that had died. The bones of the summons that were originally theirs sprang up from the ground and headed towards the Kingdom of Death. They lined up and became Death’s shield.

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

At that moment, all of them felt that they would not be able to win. He was an absolute monster. Thirty minutes later...

The world was in shock. However, there was one fact that brought them more shock. The moment he sat on his throne, Death did not stand up at all. In other words, he won without fighting personally. The reporters immediately flocked around Death, who was wearing his white mask, after the game.

“Mister Death, please say something!”

“Did you expect the result of this game?!”

“The entire world is looking at you right now. Plenty of them are saying that the Summit Five had become the Summit Six right now. Please leave us some words!”

“Moving forward, are you also going to establish a kingdom?”

Death looked around the hundreds of reporters that surrounded him. His words were simple and concise. He said, “I dedicate this honor to Food God Minhyuk.”

That was the end of his words. However, the impact of his words was huge. This was because he did not mention anything else aside from dedicating his honor and glory to Food God Minhyuk. And when they looked at where Death was headed, they saw Minhyuk standing there, waiting for him with his hand stretched out and a small smile on his face. Death grabbed his hand and said, “I... Please accept me as a member of Let’s Eat Sect.”

“Woaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“This... this is a scoop!”

Click, click, click, click, click!

The King of Death declared his intentions to join and work under Minhyuk’s command, causing the whole world to go into another uproar.

Chapter 418: Lesser Demon Diablo

Go Eun-ah, who was standing among the reporters, was shocked when she heard what Death said.

Who was Death? He was a powerful man that defeated all of the summoners that participated in the Summoner’s Great War without even lifting his butt off of his throne. Everyone even agreed that his power was equal to that of the Summit Five.

And right now, that very same man had declared to the world that he wanted to stand by Minhyuk. The reporters clicked away at their cameras, while the entire world felt terror creeping up from their spines from the video that was being transmitted to their screens.

*‘How strong will Let’s Eat Sect become once Death joins them?!’*

*‘Can we even fight against them?!’*

*‘If a necromancer like Death joins the Let’s Eat Sect then it’s like adding wings to a tiger!’*

A one-man kingdom. These words perfectly described Death. However, the words that Minhyuk uttered next brought greater shock to everyone watching, “No. You can’t join us.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The reporters looked at Minhyuk in stunned silence.

*‘What did you say?! Food God, are you crazy?!’*

The reporters suddenly broke out into a buzz. Even Death was shocked after hearing Minhyuk's refusal. However, Minhyuk's expression remained unfazed, it was as if he would never change his decision. And not long after, Death expressed his gratitude, "Thank you."

Minhyuk did not explain why he refused Death. But Death, who was rejected, thanked him. The people that watched this scene might not know, but the two of them were very much aware of Death's dream. It was to 'establish a kingdom' of his own. Minhyuk believed that he had enough power to do so.

Besides, Death was Rocard Kingdom's enemy, a kingdom in alliance with Minhyuk. If Death served under Minhyuk, the Let's Eat Sect would be thrown into chaos and confusion. They would just be like oil and water, never mixing together. Besides, Death said those words because he wanted to 'pay back' Minhyuk for his grace and kindness.

However, Minhyuk did not show him kindness in order for Death to repay him. Also, if Death served Minhyuk, he would not be able to expand his influence and territory in *Athenae*. After all, his 'bowl' was too big to work under Minhyuk.

All in all, refusing Death would, in fact, bring more benefits to Let's Eat Sect. The Kingdom of Death that he would establish in the future would definitely form a strong alliance with the Let's Eat Sect and become their shield.

But it did not matter whether they knew these facts or not, the entire world was busy discussing with each other in the community sites.

[The Food God is ve... No, he's very impressive! My goodness! He rejected a strong person like Death!]

[So, there really is a player that can reject a strong person like Death. Food God Minhyuk! You're really amazing.]

[The Food God has brought us a lot of surprises in this competition.]

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The Athenae: World War had brought out plenty of players, who had hidden their power, into the public eye. They were fully aware that participating in the world war would show the world the extent of their powers. However, there was one main reason why they decided to participate. Was it for the glory of their country? Or perhaps, for fame? Of course, those were also included. The biggest reason though, was the rewards that they would get once they acquired medals.

The player that won a bronze medal would be able to acquire fifty platinum. The player that won a silver medal would be able to acquire an Artifact Reward Book, a book that could randomly award an epic~legendary artifact.

And, what about winning a gold medal? It would depend on the player's choice. If the player chose to receive an artifact, they would be able to receive a legendary rank artifact, together with two hundred platinum.

It was not just limited to artifacts, the player could also choose an artifact 'material' or food 'ingredient'. According to Athenae's announcement, there was a high chance of receiving legendary-grade materials and ingredients. There was even a chance, albeit much lower, of getting God-grade materials and ingredients.

To be honest, all of the participants were more interested in God-grade materials and ingredients than a legendary-ranked artifact. After all, God-grade materials and ingredients would be able to help them approach, or even reach the 'God-rank'. Besides, 'God-grade' materials and ingredients were still not yet officially released in Athenae, so all the more reason for their curiosity and hunger to get one.

As for the overall champions, they had a very slim chance of getting a God-ranked artifact instead of a legendary artifact. But even though Athenae had announced that they could obtain such an artifact, the odds were so slim that it was basically impossible.

The most important and the biggest reward was the MVP reward that would only be awarded to the player with the most medals. The rewards that the MVP would receive were naturally greater than the other rewards. In fact, the rewards that the MVP would receive had already been discussed by the management and the individual players before the Athenae: World War had started, they even signed a contract with the company.

The reward that Minhyuk asked for during the discussion was the 'God's Land', something that could increase the amount of crops that they could harvest from Ingredient Heaven. The surprising fact was, Locke was the one that found out about the God's Land in one of the books that he read. It was also the decisive reason that pushed Minhyuk in participating in Athenae: World War. In the end, the force that drove Minhyuk forward was still food.

With Death's performance, South Korea has once again taken a gold medal. But after that, they only tasted bitterness. During the 'Archer's Great War', Root only settled for the silver medal and failed to get the gold medal, despite his splendid performance. Right now, South Korea only had four gold medals and one silver medal. On the other hand, America had five gold medals, two silver medals and four bronze medals, with China and Japan following closely behind.

China and Japan were able to follow closely behind America because France, which Calauhel belonged to and the country they predicted to be close contenders, made blunders and dug their own graves during the Penalty Shoot-Out and Summoner's Great War.

And the event that was going to be held soon was none other than the 'Named Monster Hunting'. And the one representing Korea for this event was Minhyuk, who was currently waiting for the game to start in five minutes.

Meanwhile, the commentators quickly explained the rules of the event.

[The Named Monster Hunting event is as simple as its name suggests. The players are tasked to hunt the named monsters that would appear all over the area and get points. The players can get higher points for the monsters that they hunt, depending on the monster's rank based on the Named Monster Ranking that the Athenae Management have set. The monsters will generally be ranked from one to five. The lower the number, the stronger the monster, and the higher the score.]

[On top of that, the players can use various potions, artifact materials, cooking ingredients, materials for bomb manufacturing and many other items during the event.]

[This rule aims to let the players exert their strongest power during the event. Ah, naturally, they can't use it indefinitely. Each person can only drink up to three potion bottles. However, the ingredients and materials in their inventory, as well as the ingredients and materials that the named monsters will drop can be used indefinitely.]

[There's also a monster ranked zero. We'll pass the mic over to President Kang Taehoon for this. President, please explain it to us.]

[There will only be one zero-ranked monster that will appear in this event. Since this zero-ranked monster is stronger than all of the named monsters in this event, there will be scores for successful attacks, successful damage, and attack evasion. A zero-ranked monster is something that none of the rankers can easily deal with, it was placed there to show them that only a part of the Athenae worldview has been released to the public and that there are still a lot of strong beings in existence out there waiting for them. If, by any chance, someone successfully hunts this monster in this event, they will be hailed as this event's champion.]

Everyone was filled with expectations after hearing President Kang Taehoon's explanation. That was the zero-ranked monster, a monster that was yet to be revealed to the world! In fact, even the named monsters that were known to the world were already very hard for the ordinary viewers to hunt, that was why they were excited to watch the rankers hunt these monsters.

[I heard that this competition has a special system. Is that true?]

[That's right. The emotions of the zero-ranked monster will ring as notifications to the players and will be displayed to the audience on the screens. Even though the monster is a zero-ranked monster they also have emotions, like 'fear' and the like, and would change from time to time. I'm sure it will make the audience go wild, watching the rankers push the zero-ranked monster to its limit.]

[But unlike other games, we can expect plenty of variables to appear in the Named Monster Hunting event.]

[That's only natural. There are other classes that have special abilities for monster hunting.]

[Just being the strongest in PVP won't make you the best in monster hunting. There will definitely be someone else that would reach the apex in monster hunting.]

[Let me tell you this. According to the experts, it will be hard for those players hailed as the strongest in their own fields to keep the title of the strongest in this Named Monster Hunting event.]

[Then, how about our very own, South Korea's Food God Minhyuk?]

[Player Minhyuk is definitely our pride and he really is a strong competitor, but we must expect a difficult battle ahead. Compared to the Penalty Shoot-Out, he will not have Ali and Root to support him. It's also still up for discussion if his strong abilities could exert great power in a battle against named monsters. And that's not all. Calauhel is also playing in this event, so we can expect him to do his best to keep Minhyuk in check.]

[I think it's not a bad idea for Player Ali to participate in this event with his AOE magic.]

[This is mainly because players can't participate in two consecutive games. And Ali will be participating in the following event, the 'Magic Battle'.]

[The players are entering their capsules as we speak!]

[I'm so excited to watch these players hunt named monsters!]

What greeted the players when they entered the stadium was a different view from the stadiums that had been used so far. There was hot lava erupting all over the place and the atmosphere was dark and gloomy. It was as if they were in the...

“De... Demon World...?!”

That was right. Just like one of the spectators said, the stadium looked like the Demon World depicted in comic books. Then, dozens of named monsters began to appear. The audience wondered if the reason why the Demon World appeared was because of the existence of the zero-ranked monster. This was because the zero-ranked monster was the boss mob of this Named Monster Hunting event. Minhyuk, who appeared after a warp, also saw the named monsters appearing one after the other around him.

Right now, all of the players were thinking the same thing. The zero-ranked named monster would appear towards the end of the game, so they had to do their best to gain points by quickly hunting the other named monsters. America’s Alexander moved swiftly. Japan’s Kentaro also moved, not losing ground against him. Minhyuk also tried to move. However, Calauhel appeared in front of him before he could do so. He was not alone. The other players that were also wary of Minhyuk’s strength also moved to block him.

*‘Just like I thought, it’s going to be difficult from the start.’*

Minhyuk frowned. But then, at that moment, a startling notification rang out for everyone. Calauhel, who was trying to attack Minhyuk, and even Alexander and Kentaro, who were dashing forward to hunt monsters, also heard the notification.

[The Zero Monster has shown itself to the world!]

Booooooooooom—

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

It happened in an instant. Dozens of black lightning bolts struck down the ground. Then, the players heard another notification.

[The Zero Monster is happily greeting someone.]

“...?”

“What the hell?”

“What nonsense is this?! Why did the zero-ranked monster appear at the start?!”

“Shit! He came out to welcome someone?!”

The players shouted in disbelief. Who was the one that made the zero-ranked monster come out to meet them? What kind of bullshit was this? However, the notifications did not end there.

[The Zero Monster will never forget the player that shed tears for him.]

[The Zero Monster remembers the player that gave his all for him.]

Then...

Baaaaaaang—

...the figure of the monster appeared in front of them as the final black lightning bolt struck down. Contrary to what the Athenae management had announced, the monster had the figure of a human, who was around 180 centimeters tall, with a

sword hanging on his waist. There was one player that accidentally made eye contact with him. This player was none other than Japan's Kentaro. And Kentaro...

[The transcendental power of the being in front of you has forced you to submit.]

[You will experience difficulty in breathing.]

*"Gasp, gasp, gasp, gasp."*

Kentaro, who was in disbelief, felt the sweat drip down his entire body. Just a simple eye contact and he was already brought down to his knees with an abnormal status. The number of players groaning and moaning started to increase. Finally, the monster's eyes stared at the place where Minhyuk was standing. Then, the notifications started to ring once again.

[The identity of the Zero Monster has been revealed!]

[He is a being that was once a human. However, the Great Demons turned him into a vessel that would contain their demonic energy. He is an existence that even the Great Demons fear.]

[Lesser Demon Diablo.]

Chapter 419: Lesser Demon Diablo

Everyone watched as Diablo, the zero-ranked monster, moved to stand in front of Food God Minhyuk the moment he revealed his appearance. All of them, whether they were in the stands or inside the stadium, were left in doubt and disbelief.

"What the hell? Is this some kind of bug?! Why would a monster like that show interest in a player?!"

"I know that this is the very first World War, but aren't you a bit too lax when it comes to this part?!"

Even the commentators voiced their concerns.

[Unlike other games, Athenae is famous for not having any major bugs. On top of that, President Kang Taehoon and Joy Co. Ltd. have always been transparent with us about their work process and etiquette. So, there shouldn't be a fatal error especially with the whole world paying attention to this event.]

[Wouldn't it disrupt the game if the Zero Monster shows interest in a player?]

In fact, even the management team was also in a mess.

"This is impossible...!"

"Team Leader, what should we do?"

Park Minggyu and Lee Minhwa stared at the huge screen, which was displaying the scene of Diablo looking at Minhyuk, in shock.

"I didn't expect that Player Minhyuk's influence on Diablo would be so strong. For him to recognize him even though he is in a 'Frenzied State' is very shocking..."

Of course, the Athenae management was aware that Diablo and Minhyuk met in the past. However, Supercomputer Athenae, the god that controlled the Athenae worldview, wanted Diablo in this contest.

God Athenae's involvement in the game process was very considerable. In fact, it was safe to say that most of the events in Athenae were created by the A.I.. The job of the Athenae management was to add more flesh to the plans and make it more complete. They also voiced their concerns about Diablo meeting Minhyuk, but the supercomputer had emphasized Diablo's frenzied state.

A lot of things happened in the Demon World after Minhyuk and Diablo's meeting. Diablo conquered the Demon World's Tower, then went to the 'Demon's Land' and pointed his sword at Great Demon Verus. As his resentment against Great Demon Verus grew by the day, his strength also grew.

However, the difference between a great demon and a lesser demon was definitely a huge chasm that he could not cross so easily. In fact, the truth was, it was Great Demon Verus that gave Diablo the foothold to grow stronger. This was because he viewed Diablo as a form of entertainment of some sorts. When he found out about that, Diablo's anger and resentment grew even further, to the point that he reached a frenzied state which resulted in the loss of most of his feelings as a human that he had regained just recently.

However, with the appearance of someone that was deeply ingrained in his memories, Diablo was able to regain some semblance of his sanity and emotion.

Eventually, President Kang Taehoon began to talk.

*[It would be a lie if I said that I'm not surprised by this situation.]*

Kang Taehoon knew that he would appear proud and knew-it-all, if he were to pretend as if he and his team had predicted this to happen.

[However, Joy Co. Ltd. has always considered the anomalies and variables that would appear in every event. And the same is true for the players associated with Diablo. But please don't forget that the name of this event is 'Named Monster Hunting' event.]

The clamoring crowd slowly returned to calm after hearing Kang Taehoon's firm and unshakeable voice.

[One has to hit or hunt the Zero Monster to get closer to the medal. So, what would happen if the player was friends with them? That means that they'll get further away from the medal.]

That was right. This was the Named Monster Hunting event, an event where they get ahead of others by literally hunting monsters. Kang Taehoon continued to speak...

[However, don't you think that it would be interesting if a player made the shocking choice of teaming up with Diablo? In the end, that player is just one among dozens of other players. We don't know what or how much power he will be able to give to Diablo, but I'm sure that the variables that will come out from that choice will be very interesting.]

President Kang Taehoon's words had the power to attract people and make them understand. Even the commentators agreed with him.

[That's right. In the end, this event is called Named Monster Hunting event.]



[We don't know if they would work together, but we know that this is a field where they have to hunt named monsters. It wouldn't matter if they met once, they have to hunt that monster.]

Right after the commentators' words, an Indian player named Sajan did something that he should not have done. He threw his huge axe and attacked Diablo. That was when a truly shocking scene unfolded in front of everyone, an invisible sword suddenly appeared near Diablo and stopped the axe's descent. At the same time...

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

...a strong and powerful force stretched out of Diablo's body and covered the entire stadium. Then, invisible swords flew towards the players. But they were high rankers, they could easily predict the course of the attack with the change in the air, or the sound of the attack, and defend against it.

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

“Keuhaaaaaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaaaaargh!”

“Keheok!”

However, something strange happened. The rankers were able to successfully take on a defensive posture, but their bodies were still torn apart and blown away, receiving great damage. This was an AOE attack that damaged forty players all at once! Surprisingly enough, Minhyuk was also among those that had been affected by the attack.

[Player Minhyuk was also attacked by Diablo's invisible weapons!]

[Player Minhyuk was able to enlarge his frying pan and defend against the attacks, but he still flew back from the impact! His frying pan is already torn apart even though it has only received one attack. It seems like he won't be able to use it anymore.]

Sajan, the Indian player, had moved at the perfect time, just after President Kang Taehoon's words. This made the crowd believe his words more.

[But why did Player Sajan decide to suddenly attack Diablo?]

[I know right. It seems like all of the players will view him in a bad light from now on.]

[From what I can see, Player Sajan has lower chances of getting a medal compared to the other players. I think he's aiming for higher chances of getting a medal by forcing the other players to attack and keep Diablo in check.]

Meanwhile, President Kang Taehoon took off his headset and headed to where the management team was for a rest. Lee Minhwa, with her hands clasped together, looked at her president with respect and admiration. She thought, *‘Oh my god! The president is really on a different level! He can attract the attention of the crowd and make them understand the situation! As expected of our president!’*

However, contrary to her thoughts, President Kang Taehoon was actually very nervous. He rushed to where his employees were and...

“Team Leader Park.”

“Yes, president?”

“What do I do? I think I’m in trouble,” Kang Taehoon said, sweat dripping down his back and forehead.

“You made that up?”

“What I said should be right. In the end, Player Minhyuk had to keep Diablo in check. If he did not do so, then he would not be able to win a medal.”

Lee Minhwa, on the other hand, could not understand what they were worried about. She said, “President, you’re still worried about his ‘methods’?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

Lee Minhwa looked at him in doubt. But then, Team Leader Park said, “But if Player Minhyuk chooses to use ‘Let’s Have a Meal’ and join hands with Diablo, then...”

“...!”

Only then did Lee Minhwa realize that it would have gone as President Kang Taehoon said if it were any other player. However, Minhyuk was different. With his abilities as a ‘buffer’ in the form of his dishes, Minhyuk could create the best and worst team possible.

“And if he makes a legendary-grade dish then...”

The monster hunting field would usher in a new stage. It would be Diablo and Minhyuk versus forty global players. The problem was that they could not guarantee who would take the victory.

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If they knew about what Minhyuk was thinking while they were having a serious discussion, President Kang Taehoon and the management team would surely shout, ‘*Stop that thought, you rascal!*’

‘*It’s an AOE attack, so it’s understandable that he attacked everyone and did not avoid me.*’

The truth was, Minhyuk was also conflicted about what he should do with his and Diablo’s relationship. Should he attack him or should he make him his ally? However, there was a way for him to solve this problem. It was none other than Minhyuk’s skill: ‘*Create a Recipe*’.

‘Create a Recipe’ was a skill that could allow him to peek at the food that the other person wanted to eat the most. But that was not all, there were also cases where he could take a peek at the other person’s physical and psychological state. Then, Minhyuk used his Create a Recipe skill on Diablo. Minhyuk’s lips curled into a wide grin after using the skill.

‘*I can do it with Let’s Have a Meal.*’

As expected, that was the conclusion that Minhyuk had reached.

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Before Oh Changwook came to work under Kang Minhoo's mansion as Minhyuk's health trainer, there was Lee Jin-Sung. He was also the informant that leaked the fact that Minhyuk had 'eating addiction'. Of course, Lee Jin-Sung did not do it by himself. He only did it because of someone's instigation.

Right now, he was fidgeting in anxiety as he sat inside the police station. His biggest problem was the fact that Ilhwa Group's legal team did not want to let him go. Lee Jin-Sung looked around the dark investigation room in trepidation.

*'I might have done something bad, but are you telling me that my sin is so heavy that you're even investigating me in an environment like this?'*

Lee Jin-Sung really could not understand what was happening. Then, suddenly, a man opened the door and came inside. Lee Jin-Sung had no choice, but to stand up after seeing the man's familiar face.

"Cha, Chairman..."

That was right. It was Chairman Kang Minhoo. Lee Jin-Sung felt suffocated and pressured when he saw him come inside and sit in front of him, despite the kind smile on his face.

"That was a bit shocking. I did not expect that you would go around revealing Minhyuk's secret."

It was only natural. After all, Lee Jin-sung did not lose his job because he was fired, but because he decided to quit to do something else. Before he quit, he and Minhyuk treated each other as if they were brothers.

"I'm... I'm sorry," Lee Jinsung apologized. Even if he had ten mouths, he would still have nothing to say to the man in front him. All he could do was apologize.

"Is that so? Ah, did you eat yet?"

Lee Jin-Sung went silent. He had not eaten yet. Chairman Kang Minhoo looked at him before turning to the policeman and asking for two bowls of hot soup with some rice. Not long after, two bowls of hot soup and rice were placed in front of the two. The soup was none other than blood sausage soup and was filled with plenty of ingredients. Lee Jin-Sung could not help but cry after eating spoonfuls of the soup.

*'Aaaaaaah! Chairman Kang Minhoo!'*

Lee Jin-Sung felt the extent of Kang Minhoo's generosity and mercy. He even took care of a great sinner like him! Lee Jin-Sung felt regret flood in him as his tears fell down his cheeks.

"Who is it?"

"...Whoever you're thinking of is correct."

"Daehan Group?"

“...”

Lee Jin-Sung nodded silently. He thought that he would only be able to leave this place if he asked for the forgiveness of the man in front of him.

Kang Minhoo nodded as if he had expected it. Then, he said, “I’m sure you received a lot of money for that. What a mistake to make, and at such a young age too.”

Lee Jin-Sung nodded, thinking that Chairman Kang Minhoo was indeed a very nice person! He hated the fact that he had done something so despicable for money. It seemed like the man in front of him had forgiven him too. That was right, Kang Minhoo was still the kind person that he met in the past! Lee Jin-sung felt both gratitude and respect for a man like him, who was willing to forgive someone bad and lacking like him.

Then, Kang Minhoo softly said, “You should eat a lot,” before continuing, “I believe you won’t be able to eat something like this for a long time. You should eat a lot of this bean-mixed rice too.”

Jin-Sung’s eyes widened at that moment. The gaze that Kang Minhoo was using to look at him had turned extremely cold. He looked completely different from the person that he knew before.

#### Chapter 420: Lesser Demon Diablo

Chairman Kang Minhoo was definitely a good man. However, being a good man did not mean that he was a fool. If someone dared to touch his family or the Ilhwa Group, he would unleash his wrath upon them.

“There are a lot of people that question the way I operate and lead my company, saying that I’m not fit to be the chairman.”

Lee Jin-Sung’s pupils shook wildly as his breath stagnated from the unmistakable frost in Minhoo’s voice.

“People always tend to show their true colors the moment they think that the person they’re dealing with is a pushover. Am I right? It has helped me distinguish who my friends and enemies are so far.”

Yes, that was right. To many, Kang Minhoo was a transparent, clean, and kind chairman and this gave him the power to distinguish the true colors that people hide deeply. His kindness always gave the people the idea that his judgment and plans were flawed.

However, such a perception was completely wrong. In fact, he was deliberately exhibiting such gaps so that his enemies would reach their hands out to take advantage of them. And when they did so, like a venus flytrap, he would bite them and never let them go.

That was when Lee Jin-Sung realized, ‘*He’s a king among kings...*’

When Lee Jin-Sung sat with Daehan Group’s chairman for five minutes, he felt like he was sitting in front of a snarling beast that no ordinary person could deal with. But in front of Chairman Kang Minhoo, the person that he thought was a meek and gentle sheep, he felt as if he was in front of a sleeping tiger, a predator that stood on top of all predators.

Lee Jin-Sung felt immense regret as he stared at Kang Minhoo’s departing back.

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Ask the people about the best TV brand in Korea and they would quickly answer...

*‘If you’re talking about TVs then of course it’s Ilhwa!’*

Ask them about the best smartphone brand and...

*‘Of course it’s Ilhwa!’*

Then what about groceries?

*‘If it’s groceries then it’s definitely Ilhwa!’*

What about buildings?

*‘The buildings that Ilhwa makes are on an entirely different class! Kyaa~!’*

Ask them what brand is next best when it came to TV, smartphone, groceries, and buildings, and they would say...

*‘It’s a bit of a pity but I think it’s Daehan Group?’*

That was right. Daehan Group had always lagged behind Ilhwa Group. They always placed second! Daehan Group’s Chairman Eom Jin-Woong had trampled on plenty of his enemies. He reached this point by stealing other’s works and trampling on them right after. Yes, he was someone that could easily betray yesterday’s friend.

However, no matter what he did, he could never bring down the Ilhwa Group. Ilhwa Group was an existence akin to a tall mountain, it could easily block the grandeur of a small mountain like his.

Once again, Eom Jin-Woong realized how tough and sturdy Ilhwa Group was.

Eom Jin-Woong thought he found a crack in Ilhwa Group’s defenses through Kang Minhyuk, the chairman’s son. Now was the time when they needed to find someone to take over for Chairman Kang Minhoo. It did not matter how fair and transparent he was as a chairman, he would still need to find a successor.

Of course, he did not want someone with the blood of a king like Minhoo to sit in that position. It just so happened that he received a tip about Minhoo’s son having a very rare disease called eating addiction! A disease that would eventually lead to death! With information like this out in the open, Ilhwa Group’s shareholders would definitely feel shaken and would do their best to support another successor. Once that happened, Ilhwa Group would eventually fall behind their company.

Eom Jin-Woong thought that he had dealt them a heavy blow. To his dismay, Ilhwa Group was able to overcome this blow and even climbed higher than where they were before.

*‘I can’t believe he was able to stand up and overcome an incurable disease like that...’*

Eom Jin-Woong gritted his teeth as they tried their best to block the mouths of the reporters that they had gathered on stand-by. After leaking information about Minhyuk having eating addiction, he planned to take advantage of the fact that he was going to participate in the Athenae: World War to announce that he was Chairman Kang Minhoo’s son.

In fact, rumors had already started to circulate about that fact. Thankfully, the hype and discussion about the World War had buried the topic.

*‘My son should win against the Ilhwa Group’s next generation!’*

At that moment, he received a call. It was from Chairman Kang Minhoo.

[It’s me.]

His greeting was brief and blunt. Then, he asked...

[Did you really have to go that far?]

“You know how our world works. Our Daehan Group’s next generation will be the best group in Korea.”

[Then I will respond accordingly. Today, an article will be released saying that Minhyuk is my son.]

“...!”

Eom Jin-Woong’s eyes widened, his body trembling in shock, after hearing his words.

“We... weren’t you trying to hide him?”

[Afraid? Once I reveal that my son, Minhyuk, is Ilhwa Group’s successor, our stocks will soar tremendously.]

The reason why Eom Jin-Woong had gathered reporters was because he knew that he would be able to deal a fatal blow to Ilhwa Group once the fact that Minhyuk was Kang Minhoo’s son was revealed. They would cause a stir that would result in Ilhwa’s stocks plummeting.

However, that would only happen if Minhyuk had not overcome his eating addiction.

If Ilhwa released that Minhyuk was their successor right now, his success story and outstanding abilities, including the fact that he was a global Athenae top ranker, would completely overturn the situation. Ilhwa’s stocks would definitely soar, which would help them reach new heights.

“Didn’t you tell me that you hate to use your child for the sake of the group, hyung?!”  
Eom Jin-Woong stuttered in a hurry.

Then, Kang Minhoo said...

[Yes. I still hate it. But this is what my son wanted.]

Jin-Woong finally realized after hearing Kang Minhoo’s words that the tiger’s cub had finally grown up to become an adult tiger. And that tiger was now trying to bite back at his aggressor.

*‘This, this...!’*

Not long after, Jin-Woong regained his calm. He said, “Your son might be doing well right now but don’t you think that it would also pose a threat?”

*Athenae* was now like another world, a game with astronomical value. If he could take most of the spotlight in the World War, his value would soar tremendously if the fact that he was Chairman Kang Minhoo’s son was revealed.

But what if it was not the case? Then, he would not make a huge impact for the company.

But Kang Minhoo said...

[As a father, all I need to do is trust my own son.]

“...”

For some reason, Eom Jin-Woong felt a strange sense of defeat. All he could do was refuse to react to his words.

“What if he made a mistake? You will definitely receive a huge blow by then, right?”

Jin-Woong was just spitting out whatever words that came to his mind. Then, Minhoo said...

[So what if he made a mistake? That’s something that I have to deal with as his father.]

Tremble, tremble—

The strange sense of defeat grew stronger in Jin-Woong to the point that his body trembled.

“You... you’re telling me that you will continue to care for and treasure your son even if all he does is play games?! You’re not going to teach Minhyuk the ways to be a successor?! You’ll just let him play games like that?”

Minhoo responded...

[All I want is my son to be happy. So what if he can’t be my successor? He’s the apple of my eye. As long as he’s happy then everything would be fine. Isn’t that right?]

Jin-Woong felt a wave of shame wash over him as a stronger sense of defeat pervaded his body. He was completely different from Minhoo. What he did was push his son, who never wanted to become a chairman, to a cliff by forcing him to become his successor.

*‘Become the best! Do all of this! Lead this group and trample on Ilhwa Group!’*

Eom Jin-Woong was fully aware that his son was living in hell each and every day. Then, Kang Minhoo said...

[Don’t push your son away just because of your greed. For once, think about what’s best for him. That’s all. I’m hanging up now.]

The moment the call ended, Jin-Woong threw the smartphone in his hands.

Crack—

His breathing turned rough from anger. He was angry because he knew. He knew that his greed was making his son unhappy. He knew how heavy the weight he was forcing onto his son, by pushing him to become a chairman and defeating Ilhwa Group.

But, Kang Minhyuk was a different breed from him.

“Do... do you really think that Kang Minhyuk will do well in this event, huh?!”

Athenae’s value was astronomical. That was why Daehan Group had hired the best Athenae experts under their name. He could easily hear an answer the moment he asked them a question.

“Do you think he will try to cooperate with the monster in this Named Monster Hunting event?”

“I don’t know. He had met Diablo in the past so there’s a chance. Besides, countless players will definitely keep Kang Minhyuk in check.”

“He won’t be able to make a huge splash in this game. There’s Alexander and Calauhel, as well as the Chinese Hunter King called the Monster Hunter God.”

Only then did Eom Jin-Woong smile in relief.

*‘Kang Minhyuk will not be able to make a huge splash!’*

That should definitely be the case. When that happened, Daehan Group would no longer lag behind Ilhwa Group. But what Jin-Woong did not know was that what he heard were these experts’ mere guesses.

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Minhyuk finally decided on a course of action while watching Calauhel and the rest of the players keep a distance from him.

“You’re quite lucky,” Calauhel spat, voice carrying a hint of threat.

The tremendous display of power that Diablo showed them earlier made the rankers keep their distance from Minhyuk. They already assumed that Diablo and Minhyuk were close. This meant that attacking Minhyuk would incur Diablo’s wrath, which would result in Diablo targeting them with powerful blows like that. And it would work as an advantage for Minhyuk.

Instead of keeping him in check, the rankers had no choice but to focus their attention on hunting named monsters instead.

[China’s Hunting King has gone ahead by killing a named monster!]

[Diablo is not moving an inch from his spot! This is completely contrary to our worries!]

[Alexander has already killed two named monsters as we speak. That’s very amazing!]

[Named monsters are continuously being summoned in the field. This game will end in two hours. But I’m sure that we can feast our eyes with their splendid battles during the entire duration of the game!]

Yes, the spectacular battles were truly a feast to the eyes of both the spectators and commentators. Just by running and attacking them a few times, the rankers were able to assess the named monsters’ characteristics and weaknesses, quickly devising strategies to kill them. This was an amazing feat that no ordinary player could pull off, and right now they were being blessed to see the complete process as to how the rankers do it. It was certainly a brilliant and spectacular view for them to watch and study.

The ones that took the lead were Alexander and China’s Hunting King. Hunting King was so famous that people declared him as the world’s number one monster hunter, especially with one of his skills specializing in analyzing and hunting monsters. On the other hand, Alexander was literally the strongest.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk started to enact his plans.

[Huh, huuuuuuuuuuuuuuuh?! Pl... Player Minhyuk is rushing towards Diablo!!!]



[What?! What's happening right now? He was also damaged by Diablo's attack earlier so why is he rushing to where Diablo is?!]

[Perhaps he changed plans and will now attack Diablo?!]

[It could be very dangerous for him. Besides we still haven't confirmed how strong his single-attack skill is!]

Every player turned their attention to where Minhyuk was. After all, they could suffer from damage once Minhyuk rubbed Diablo the wrong way. They watched as Minhyuk ran and stood face to face with Diablo before shouting, "Let's Have a Meal!"

A barrier encircled Minhyuk and Diablo.

\*\*\*

ATV's PD Kim Daeguk went to Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium today to watch Minhyuk and Diablo up close. He was very excited for Minhyuk's performance today. He was certain that Minhyuk would definitely use a new and fresh method. Although Athenae and its management will be in trouble, it would be a 'shocking and exciting broadcast' for them so he just could not let it pass.

At that moment, Minhyuk arrived near Diablo and cast 'Let's Have a Meal'.

"Cameras! Focus on Player Minhyuk! Zoom in on him! Make sure that you don't miss any of his pores!!! All cameras, except for the bare minimum to track the other players, focus on Player Minhyuk!"

"Are, are we really going to focus most of our cameras on Player Minhyuk?"

"Yes! Okay, I'll take care of whatever consequence that will come out of it!"

PD Kim believed in Minhyuk. And it was because of that that he made that decision. Besides, it was because of Minhyuk that ATV obtained its highest recorded rating before.

At this moment, only ATV's cameras focused on Minhyuk. This was a gamble. Focusing on shooting only one player meant that there was a chance that their broadcast could become boring. But what if a variable appeared on that player? Also, there was one more thing that PD Kim had taken into consideration. Player Minhyuk's cooking was enough to secure their viewership ratings.

*'But will Player Minhyuk really work together with Diablo?'*

If he did that, then he would have to deal with all of the players. Besides, could he really control Diablo? But surprisingly enough, Diablo did not attack Minhyuk. But before something could happen, shocking information was released to the world.

"P... PD! Right, right now, on the internet...!"

"...?"

PD Kim Daeguk, who was closely monitoring Minhyuk's actions on the monitor, looked at his smartphone in doubt. His eyes widened after seeing the real-time search results.

1. Food God Minhyuk. Ilhwa Group's Successor.

2. Eating Addiction.

3. World War: Named Monster Hunting.

“...!”

PD Kim’s body trembled as he looked at Minhyuk’s figure on the screen. Meanwhile, the stands were in a buzz as their expectations on what he would do and achieve soared even higher.

However, they believed that things were not going swimmingly for Minhyuk. Let’s Have a Meal’s duration was quite long. During its duration, Hunting King and Alexander, who were currently ranked first and second, would continue to raise their scores, while Minhyuk would have no points at all. Everyone felt their hearts rise to their throats.

*‘I know that you’ll give a buff to Diablo when you use Let’s Have a Meal, but it’s not going to be easy...’*

But then, something very unusual happened.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

It was more shocking than unusual. A pillar of light suddenly fell and surrounded Minhyuk, who was standing in the middle of the Named Monster Hunting field. The players in the midst of hunting named monsters stopped and looked back at Minhyuk when they saw the pillar of light fall. There, they saw Diablo shedding tears as Minhyuk handed a dish to him. Along with that, a series of notifications rang loudly.

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

[This message resonates loudly throughout the entire continent.]

Not too long ago, they heard that the third God-rank artifact was obtained by a player in America. And now, the fourth one has appeared.

“Keheooooook!” PD Kim Daeguk shouted in shock along with the audience.

Meanwhile, in Daehan Group’s chairman’s office...

“G...God-rank?! Di... didn’t you tell me that he wouldn’t do well?!” Chairman Eom Jin-Woong shouted as he looked at the shitty experts that he hired.

“Ugh, aaaaaaaaack!” Jin-Woong shrieked as he held his neck and collapsed with a red face.

This was the prime example of ‘You reap what you sow.’