

Gourmet 431

Chapter 431: Start of War

Dragon Knight Lantino was known to be the strongest among the dragon race. There was a very famous story about him riding on the back of a dragon and fighting against tens of thousands of enemies. He was also one among the few dragon races that lived scattered all over the continent.

Lantino had chosen to live a life in seclusion after getting tired of fighting. But one day, a man came to him. The man introduced himself as Black Dragon and according to him Broque, the king of the dragon race, had fallen into eternal rest not too long ago. The man also told Dragon Knight Lantino to believe him and follow him. However, Lantino was already tired of fighting. Nevertheless, Lantino ended up going with him after the man visited him several times in a row.

There were quite a few reasons why Lantino came with the man, but it was mainly because Black Dragon was an extremely amazing man. He single-handedly supported the collapsing dragon race and helped them stand up once again. On top of that, Black Dragon was also gathering the scattered members of the dragon race that lived cut-off from the rest of the world.

‘This man has an immense amount of charm and appeal.’

Before he knew it, Lantino had already arrived at the Forgotten Dragon’s Land’s training ground with Black Dragon. Lantino was left in shock with what greeted him there.

‘He has already gathered this many dragon races?’

There was no denying the fact that this man was a very amazing person. Sweat dripped down Lantino’s forehead as he looked at the man beside him. This man was more than qualified to lead the dragon race.

More than 5,000 members of the dragon race, a number that was a first for a gathering of a race known for their low reproduction rate, gathered and lined up in front of Black Dragon. Not long after, Lantino grinned widely.

“Fufu. Are you the one that will join us to command the world in the future? Just the thought is making my blood boil already. I can’t control myself! Keuhaha!”

“Kekeke! That’s right. Join us and let us show the world how fearsome the dragons are! Keuhahaha!”

“Keuhahaha!”

“Keuhahahahaha!”

A laughter, reminiscent of a chuunibyou, rang loudly in the area! By the end of it, Dragon Knight Lantino stood in front of the troops and knelt down on one knee. He declared, “Oh great and strong man, I, Lantino, will be delighted to stay by your side and paint the world in despair! I can already hear their screams of agony. Keuhaha!”

If someone heard Lantino’s words, they would definitely say: *‘That’s the?chuunibyou? ambassador!’*

But Black Dragon just smiled a dark smile and said, “Keuhuhuhu! Let’s use the power going berserk in our right arms to either save the world or bring it to despair.”

That was right. The most decisive reason why Lantino joined Black Dragon was because they were comrade-in-arms. After all, Lantino was also someone that had also reached the peak of being a chuunibyou.

In the end, the 5,000-strong troops knelt down on one knee and cried loudly.

“The power in my right hand is going berserk! My burning and passionate heart can melt even the strongest of enemies!”

“The power in my right hand is going berserk! My burning and passionate heart can melt even the strongest of enemies!”

“Keuhahahahahahaha!”

“Kekekekekekeke!”

“Keuhuhuhuhuhuhu!”

Their crazy laughter rang loudly in the area.

Ares was very shocked to see Death suddenly rushing straight at them.

“Wh... why is Death here?!”

Before they invaded, they assumed that Death would not appear anywhere near Atlas. After all, Minhyuk had refused him when he asked to join his guild during the Athenae: World War.

The truth was, Minhyuk refused Death’s request in consideration for his circumstances and dreams and Death felt very grateful for that. However, the entire world did not know that.

And Death, who was now running straight towards them, was just working hard on his mission to become Rocard Kingdom’s ‘Tsun-tsun Death’ as usual. He secretly tagged along the convoy headed for Atlas Territory to protect the people of Rocard Kingdom in case they met with a group of monsters. The reason why he was secretly following them was because the convoy still loathed and resented him deeply.

So, Death hid behind the convoy while eradicating the monsters that popped out near them to make sure that they would have no inconvenience on their way to Atlas.

Hundreds of skeleton knights riding on top of death horses made of bones sprung up from the ground one after the other as Death swung his staff. They were the Death Cavalry! The Death Cavalry acted as vanguards as they rushed forward and collided with the leading enemy cavalry.

Slaaaaash—

Grab!

“Hihihihing!”

Stab, stab, stab—

“Keuhaaaaaaack!”

“Dieeeeeeee!”

A violent and fierce conflict occurred. Ares quickly took command as arrows and magic rained down from the sky.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

A huge shield, the size of a house, made of bones rose from the ground the moment Death stabbed his staff on the ground.

[Undead’s Shield]

[A gigantic shield with additional 500% defense will protect the undead.]

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

Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump!

The shield’s high defense deflected countless arrows raining down from the sky. Even the magic bombs could not break through the Undead’s Shield’s defense. Fifteen Death Knights also started to move from both sides, wiping out the enemy cavalry in an instant. By that time, Death was already standing in front of Ares.

“This is none of your business, Death. Stand back. If you don’t stand back now, even your Kingdom of Death will also be implicated.”

Death looked at Ares and the people around him sharply. These people were the best guild leaders of the country. This meant that a considerable number of guilds in the country joined hands and came here with the determination to thoroughly destroy the Let’s Eat Sect. No matter how strong and excellent the Let’s Eat Sect was, it would be hard to fight against dozens, no, perhaps hundreds of guilds that have joined hands together.

Hyrenas were no match for elephants, but if hundreds of hyenas ganged up to fight against an elephant, the story would change. Ares had given Death a warning. He was warning him that if he did not step back at this point in time, then their alliance would destroy him.

But Death’s gaze remained indifferent.

“Shall we go first?”

Screech!

“F*ckers! A single person is scaring you?! Kekekeke! Keuhahahahaha! Hihihihihih!”

The players turned pale after hearing Death’s grating laughter. Ares even gulped dryly as he said, “Your Death Knights can only exert 80% of their power from when they were alive. With plenty of rankers on our side working together, we will definitely be able to kill them all in one go. And the same is true with your liches.”

That was right. It did not matter if Death was strong. No matter how strong he was, he would be no match against several of the best Korean rankers gathered here. But then...

“Kihyeeeeeeee!” One of the skeleton knights burst out in an eerie laughter. Then, it flew fiercely while swinging its greatsword. And with the skeleton knight as the start...

Crackle—

The black robe that covered Death’s body disappeared in a burst of black flame.

Crack, crack, crack—

Bones sprang up from the ground and crept up his body, forming a bone armor. And finally, a giant scythe appeared in Death’s hand.

“Wipe them out.”

Ping—

Following Death’s orders, the Death Knights brandished their swords as they dove deep within the rankers’ ranks. And it did not stop there. Five liches flew up into the sky and dispelled the magic that was coming their way.

Slash—

“Keuhaaaaack!”

Ares’ face distorted in pain after blocking the Death Knight’s sword.

‘What the hell...?’

Death Knights were literally knights of the dead and only Named NPCs could be made into one. However, even if they were Named NPCs before, they would lose most of the power and strength that they had in the past. After all, they have already died and they had to pay a price for eternal life. However, the Death Knights in front of Ares...

‘They still have their entire power?!’

In fact, the Death Knights really did not do much during the World War. This was because the Kingdom of Death had already swept away the enemies. And even if they missed some, the soldiers stationed inside the kingdom would deal with them. The ones that made wild assumptions about the Death Knights were Ares and the other rankers.

In an instant, hundreds of undead had squeezed into the gaps of their troops.

“Keuheup!” Ares groaned as he staggered back from the two attacks that he unwillingly allowed on his body. Even the other rankers were breathing hard. Then, Ares and Death made eye contact.

“Ahihihihihi!”

Chills crept up their spine after hearing Death’s eerie laughter. Only then did they realize that something was wrong.

Alas, it was already too late. Hundreds of undead had already squeezed through the gaps of their troops. Then, Ares turned to focus at Death, whose mouth started to open and say, “The Undead’s...”

Ares immediately used his skill to break away and escape as Death spat out the end of his words, "...Sacrifice."

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

Hundreds of undead exploded from within the 4,000 strong troops. The explosion that burst out was beyond anyone's imagination. It was to the point that even the elites of Barras Kingdom had been sent flying away, while those that were weaker disappeared without a trace.

"Do you realize who you're trying to touch? Huh?! Kihihihihihhi!"

Death's upper body bent back as he howled loudly. In the eyes of the dying soldiers of Barras Kingdom, he looked like the devil incarnate.

"Ugh, uuuuuuuuuuugh..."

"Mo... monster..."

They either peed, turned pale, screamed, or ran away from fright. Meanwhile, Ares and the rankers all turned mute after seeing the explosion. Death was not just the 'devil', he was a disaster in and of itself.

Iris Guild's Callian, together with his troops, headed towards the rear of Atlas Territory. The path that they chose to walk through a large field covered with reeds that were two meters tall.

Callian, who was walking low and slow, raised his hand. The thousands of troops behind him immediately came to a halt. When he looked forward, he saw a very tall man brushing his palms against the reeds and moving about with his eyes closed. Upon closer inspection, he saw the earphones stuck in the man's ears.

"Who's that?"

However, even if they did not know who the man was, they were certain that this man was a citizen of Atlas Territory. Everyone held their breaths and watched the situation just in case the man did something.

The man was thoroughly absorbed in the music, his eyes closed, clearly intoxicated. Then, tears began to drip down the man's cheeks as he said, "Music... is the only drug allowed by the kingdom...!"

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Amidst the heavy silence, Archer Rovia used her 'Enhanced Hearing' and hummed the song the man was listening to.

"Assa~ a~ tiger swallowtail butterfly~ sat on a flowerbed~"

"..."

“...”

“...”

“...”

A Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly crazy man appeared!

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Callian once stood at the top of the country and received endless praise and admiration from the people. However, with the appearance of Kang Minhyuk, who created a stronger and bigger guild than his own, the people gradually forgot about his existence. Even his Iris Guild continued to exist in a state of decline.

What would happen if Iris Guild successfully attacked Atlas Territory and turned it into a wasteland? Without a doubt, his Iris Guild would be one of the best guilds in Korea!

But then, a madman suddenly appeared in front of him, spouting nonsense like, “Music... is the... only... unrestricted drug...!”

Callian felt goosebumps rise from his skin. Did he get goosebumps because the words were cool?

No. It was because he felt second-hand embarrassment from the man. The worst part was the song that he was listening to. It was Uncle Kim Heung-Kook’s *‘Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly’*. It was literally absurd!

Callian and the other rankers could not help but snicker at the absurdity of the situation in front of them. The 4,000 troops that Callian led had the most number of rankers. This was so they could quickly pierce through and break through Atlas’ defenses the moment it was breached. The troops being led by Callian were the elites of the elites.

“Rovia.”

“Yes, master.”

Callian grinned and called for Rovia.

Rovia, together with Master Archer Root, were the two tall mountains in Korea’s archery scene. The only difference between them was that Root used a normal bow, while Rovia used a great bow.

Unlike normal archers, great bow users required a high STR stat, so it was a given that they would sacrifice their accuracy rate. However, Rovia was as good as Root in archery in reality so she could compensate for this loss. The greatest advantage of a great bow was its high penetrative force and destructive power. With an arrow that could pierce through the thickest of metal plates, what was the need for a high accuracy rate? As long as they hit their target, then it was fine.

“Kill that man right now. This will mark the start of our Let’s Eat Sect hunt.”

“Yes.”

It was funny that the killer that would start their hunt for the Let's Eat Sect was the strange man that was not too far away from them. But then, Rovia, who was pulling her bow, looked at the man weirdly and thought, *'Where have I seen him before?'*

It was definitely a familiar face. However, Rovia did not have the time to ponder over this matter. She was a bit reluctant to kill this tiger swallowtail butterfly madman and make him the first victim in Atlas Territory. However, it was inevitable. Rovia nocked an arrow that was as large as a spear on her great bow.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Then, Rovia pulled the strings of her bow tight before releasing it.

Thwaaaaaaaaack—

The arrow flew straight towards the man, accompanied by the loud roar of wind. This was just a small pause in their march. So, Callian and his troops tried to advance again. But then, the man looked up at the butterfly fluttering in front of him with a soft smile on his face. This butterfly was in the path where the arrow would pass through. In other words, the butterfly would be torn to shreds soon.

The moment they thought so, the man gently wrapped his hand around the butterfly before twisting his body using his toes as the fulcrum and avoiding the arrow rushing straight at him. After that, the man gently unfurled his slightly closed fist and let the butterfly free. The man smiled as he watched the butterfly fly away while humming, *"Assa~ A~ tiger swallowtail butterfly~"*

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

Callian and his troops had no choice but to stop in their tracks once again.

'What the hell...?'

'The man did not even move much but caused Rovia to miss?'

They could not believe their eyes. The man just twisted his body slightly, by a mere fifteen degree, but he was able to avoid the arrow. That was so unrealistic! The more shocking part? The man was still looking and smiling at the butterfly.

"Hey, Rovia. Did you make a mistake?"

"I'm... I'm sorry, Master!"

Cold sweat dripped down Rovia's back. She did not make any mistakes. She definitely aimed for the man's forehead. Originally, the man's forehead should have exploded from the arrow, but even if that was what she intended to do, she would be put in a difficult position if she tried to explain himself.

'Rumors about me missing my shot and failing to kill such a crazy guy will definitely spread if I explained.'

It would be a stain to her honor, and become her greatest shame.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Rovia pulled the strings of her bow once again.

‘He clearly avoided the shot.’

She used her skill ‘Sure Kill Shot’. It was a skill that could increase her basic attack by four times the moment she hit his enemy’s vital point. Rankers that had been hit by her Sure Kill Shot would suffer a huge reduction in their HP. Finally, Rovia fired another shot.

Thuuuuuuuuuuump—

A louder sound than before rang loudly the moment the arrow was about to fly out. However, the man, who was five meters away from Rovia, suddenly disappeared and reappeared, grabbing the arrow with his hand.

Grab!

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Everyone present blinked blankly in surprise after seeing the man suddenly disappear from sight and appear in front of them.

‘I... I couldn’t even follow him with my eyes...’

‘What the hell?! Did he use Blink?’

Then, the man said, “You shouldn’t... hurt... the butterfly...”

Rovia looked at the field of reeds at the man’s words. There were plenty of butterflies fluttering around the field and they would definitely be torn apart from the shockwave of Rovia’s powerful arrows.

‘He stopped us because of the butterflies?’

Cold sweat dripped down Callian’s back.

‘He’s dangerous...’

However, if they did not pass through this field then they would not be able to reach Atlas Territory. Cold sweat started to drip down Callian’s forehead as the silence continued to envelope them. None of them could open their mouths.

Gulp—

The sound of someone gulping rang loudly in the otherwise quiet field, and this sound became their signal to start their attack.

“Attack!”

None of them thought that this was some kind of joke anymore. Callian even took the lead to attack the man, who was of course, Elpis.

Callian was a master of the quick sword and was a player that also completed his transfer to high class not too long ago. He had been struggling and fighting desperately to protect his slowly weakening position. But now, he had the power to deal with at least one or two members of the Let's Eat Sect.

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang, clang—

Callian's sword lights shot at Elpis quickly, while other melee players tried to attack him with their fists, feet, iron maces, and even spears. However, none of their attacks touched Elpis.

Then, Elpis gently pulled out a piece of reed and grabbed it with his hands. With that very same reed, he cut down one of the players in front of him.

Shwaaaaaaa—

“Keuhaaaaaaaaack!”

Shockingly enough, blood spurted out when the reed in Elpis' hand cut down the player, as if it was a very sharp blade. Then, Elpis swung his reed upwards, creating a crescent sword light.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaa—

The crescent sword light released a powerful force that swept all the enemies that surrounded Elpis.

“Urk!”

“Keuaaaack!”

“Keheok!”

Those that received the force from the reed's strike either collapsed, stumbled on their feet, or gripped their heaving chests. Rovia's eyes widened when she saw this.

‘Where the hell did I see this guy before? He looks really familiar...’

Rovia was sure that she had seen the man from somewhere from the very first moment that she saw the man. Not long after, her pupils dilated in fear. She finally remembered.

“Le... Lesser Demon Diablo...?”

“Wha, what?!”

“What did you say?!”

“I, I think it's true? He's really Lesser Demon Diablo!”

A buzz spread among the troops. Lesser Demon Diablo was the Zero Monster that crushed the strongest global players during the World War. After the competition, he suddenly disappeared from everyone's sight. But now, he resurfaced as a crazy guy that enjoyed music.

‘What kind of variable is this...?! Lesser Demon Diablo is in Minhyuk's territory...?!’

Rovia and Callian knew that Lesser Demon Diablo was a monster that no one could control. Of course, he joined hands with Minhyuk during the World War but, given his strength, everyone believed that he was not the kind of being that would willingly go under someone's command.

But he was actually guarding Atlas? Then, that meant that there was a very huge variable in front of them. After all, he was a tall mountain that was very hard to fight against.

"We are 4,000 strong! No matter how strong Diablo is, he can't win against our numbers! Kill him and advance to Atlas!"

There were only around forty rankers during the World War. But right now, there were 4,000 of them, a number that was a hundred times more than the number during the World War. That was why Callian thought that they could do this, that this was worth a try.

But then, Elpis pulled out the sword, the Devil Judge's Sword, that was hanging on his waist and said, "A threat to the lord... I am Let's Eat Sect's shield."

That was when Callian realized that it was his actions that goaded Elpis into bringing out his full power.

"Everyone, attack tog..."

But before Callian could even finish his words...

Stab!

"Keuaaack!" A player screamed and died on the spot.

Ping—

While another one fell down.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

Then, ten players fell down all at once.

Baaaaaaaang—

And it did not end there, Elpis sent his scythe flying towards them, killing another thirty enemies in one go before reigning it back again.

"Mages!"

High-tiered mages immediately used Blink and appeared in the skies.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

However, despite escaping to the skies, Elpis's sword moved swiftly and made the dozens of mages fall back down on the ground.

Baaaaaaaang—

Elpis raised his sword high up in the sky and swung it down. Then, disastrous sword lights flew towards the enemy troops, breaking their armors and weapons.

"Hiiiiiiiiik!"

“De...Demon...!”

“You’re a demon!!!”

The kingdom’s soldiers either peed or burst into tears after facing actual death.

Elpis, who stood on the ground, took out the MP3, pulled out his earphones and turned on the full listening function. The full listening function was a game function where the MP3 user could blast the music that it was playing in the small MP3 for everyone in the vicinity to listen to.

The music that was playing right now was *Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata 3rd Movement*. It was a music that could unknowingly captivate the listeners’ hearts with its rapidly changing tempo. Sometimes it would be slow, and sometimes it would be fast. This very same captivating melody was now ringing in the battlefield which brought a sense of urgency to survive in the listening troops. And with the fast tempo of the piano...

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

...Elpis’s sword also moved swiftly and decapitated dozens of soldiers, causing heads to fly up in the sky before falling and rolling on the ground.

Dozens of rankers rushed at him. One person’s body got cut down, two people got their heads cut off. and three got their bodies split in two. As *Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata 3rd Movement*, Beethoven’s signature song, rang calmly in the field, blood spurted out from their bodies as if they were the ensemble and Elpis was the conductor.

‘*Are we in the orchestra right now?*’

‘*Is this the orchestra of death?!*’

More and more troops died as the tempo of the song got faster and faster.

“What the hell is this...?”

Callian lost his voice as he watched the troops die helplessly under Diablo’s sword. He thought that it would be possible for them to kill such a monstrous existence with 4,000 of them working together. He thought that their number was enough to deal with him. But, seeing Diablo move with the music made him realize that he was not someone that they could handle.

As the music approached the climax, the part where the piano player’s hand moved faster and faster across the keys of the piano, Elpis’s movement also became faster and faster. And when the *Moonlight Sonata* approached the end, at the part where the performer would often raise their hands high to play the last key, he also raised his sword high up in the sky. And the moment he slammed his sword on the ground...

Baaaaaaang—

Elpis opened his arms wide and savored the lingering melody, as a powerful explosion engulfed a fifty meter radius area. The remaining troops from the original 4,000 that came with Callian exploded and died. And the same was true for Callian.

Elpis looked around the myriad of artifacts that surrounded him. He suddenly remembered what Minhyuk always said when there was food in front of him. So, he mumbled, “What a huge gain...”

Elpis, the man who wiped out 4,000 troops all by himself, was Let's Eat Sect's shield.

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Just as the troops that would attack Atlas upfront were divided into two, the troops that would attack Atlas' rear were also divided into two. One unit was led by Callian, while the other unit was led by an NPC named Ruik.

Ares aimed to create a huge fanfare by attacking the front of Atlas and forcing them to concentrate most of their forces there, while the troops in the rear would take advantage of the commotion and occupy Let's Eat Sect's territory. This was the goal of both the alliance and the Barras Kingdom.

Brony stood among the players gathered in the troops led by Commander-in-chief Ruik. Brony was the guild master of Horden Guild and Minhyuk's classmate in middle school. He tried to slaughter the miners in the chocolate mine, while also trying to deal a huge blow to Minhyuk.

Alas, his plan backfired and he eventually got defeated by Minhyuk and his Ellie noona. But, was that the end of it? No. Their identities were shared on the internet which forced their guild to dissolve. And right now, he's one of the people that had been waiting for 'this day'.

'I did not expect that bastard to become so famous.'

Minhyuk really became a great man and stood at the center of the country's attention. But Brony only felt a deep-seated hatred for him. He had been looking forward to the day when he could bring frustration to Minhyuk, the person that caused the dissolution of his Horden Guild, and started hunting monsters alone.

Because he kept on hunting for a long time, he had also grown quite a bit. Of course, it was not to the point where he could reach the rankers' level but, at the very least, he had reached the point where he could leave his own mark.

'I'll definitely slash that bastard's throat.'

Brony, who was walking on the far left side of the troops, fanned the flames of his burning determination. That was when he saw some weird pigs and chickens roaming freely around the territory.

'Are they letting the livestock roam freely so they will taste more delicious later?'

He was sure that those pigs and chickens were being raised so Minhyuk could eat them later. The thought of Minhyuk having ownership of those pigs and chickens was enough for Brony to want to tear them apart. So, he broke away from the troops for a moment to deal with them.

"I'll make you suffer an agonizing death," Brony declared as a strong force wrapped around his sword.

Just when he raised his sword to hit one of the pigs, the chicken's eyes in front of him suddenly turned ferocious. Of course, he believed that it was definitely an illusion. Then, when his sword was about to hit the pig...

Peck—

"Keuaaaaaack!" A weird sound was ripped out of his mouth.

[You have received an attack on your vital point.]

[Your HP will continue to drop if you don't stop the bleeding.]

Brony turned around, only to see blood dripping from the beak of the chicken on the ground beside him. However, it did not stop his arm from swinging his sword down and cutting the pig in front of him. No, he tried to cut the pig down.

Clang!

'What the hell...?'

The sound of steel striking steel rang loudly in the field. In other words, he was far from cutting down the pig in front of him. However, Brony's confusion, which left him in a daze, led to...

Baaaaaang—

...the pig's body slamming straight at him. Brony's HP kept on decreasing as he flew back from the pig's attack. He tried to scream but the stab that he received on his neck was gurgling with blood and prevented him from doing so. On top of that, the cow, which was among the herd of livestock, gave the final blow. It dug its hind legs on the ground to increase its momentum as it rushed forward and slammed Brony with its huge body.

Just like that, Brony's HP reached zero and he was forced to log out. That was right. Brony, who dreamed of getting his revenge on Minhyuk, died under the claws and hooves of the pigs, chickens and cows of Atlas territory. The shame of dying from these livestock was too hard to bear that he ended up shelving *Athenae* for good.

Rucado was one of the Sun Guilds' masters and he was not pleased with the fact that an NPC was leading the Let's Eat Sect Punishment Alliance troops. In fact, the members of 'Jihwaja' guild exclaimed, their words fanning the flames of dissatisfaction.

"Why did they give the NPC the right to command us?"

"Why did they put him as the commander-in-chief of all the troops that will attack Atlas Territory?"

"It's better to drag him down if we can."

Rucado only nodded to the words of his guild's attack commander. Even if he also did not like this fact, he had to control his members. He coughed, "*Ahem, ahem.* Well, you all know that Barras Kingdom is giving us support. Besides, for them, this is where they live. That's why it was better for him to take command of this battle, instead of a player like me."

His words were both true and false to some extent. If a player took the lead, then the player would gain huge benefits. However, the reason why Rucado could not protest against their decision to make Ruik their commander-in-chief was...

'I almost died when I tried to say something about it. You punks.'

Ruik had trampled on all three of them, Rucado, Ares and Callian, in under thirty seconds. That was when they realized that Ruik was on an entirely different level, and right then and there, they accepted Ruik as the commander-in-chief.

‘The Land of the Gods and the story about God’s Swords are true.’

According to rumors, there were Swords that protected the Gods living in the empire inside the Land of the Gods. These Swords had strength and power that were far beyond anyone’s imagination, and were even rumored to have enough power to easily trample on the strongest of players. The empire was also said to be protected by God Athenae himself.

At first, Rucado believed that these rumors were just a myth. But today, he realized that it was not the case at all. This was because Ruik was one of the Swords that guarded and protected the God’s Empire. His strength was believed to be enough to crush Minhyuk or Alexander with just one hand alone.

And right now, Ruik, an envoy of the God’s Empire, was leading their troops.

‘The gods do not want another kingdom to be created in this world yet.’

A few decades ago, a child was praised for his talent in swordsmanship and was said to be someone that could become a Continental Swordsman. Receiving a decree from the God’s Empire, this child, now a man, became a knight there. Whenever this man descended to the ground, he would be referred to as the Sword of the Gods. This man was none other than Ruik.

It was believed that he was so talented in the sword that he could easily push down and trample on the Knight Tower’s tower master.

Ruik was given the task to watch over and monitor the king of Barras Kingdom, as well as manage and take charge of everything concerning the kingdom. This was how the Sword of Gods were dispatched and placed in kingdoms all over the continents in the world. There were even times when the Sword of Gods had more power than the kingdom or empire’s ruler.

This was because the God’s Empire that was located in the Land of the Gods sat on the apex of everything in this world. In front of this empire, the entire world had to kneel down equally. In front of this empire, everyone was uncivilized. The truth was, the God’s Empire was a system that the management and operators had created to balance the kingdoms and empires in the world.

‘How dare a foreigner dream of creating a kingdom?!’

Ruik was enraged at the audacity of the Let’s Eat Sect and was very determined to slaughter them and lay them to waste. Just when they were about to advance, the ground suddenly started to tremble. Ruik frowned.

‘An army? No, it’s not an army. It feels more like the sound of animals running.’

Just like what he thought, there were 10,000 animals, from pigs, cows, chickens and horses, running freely from afar.

‘Why are the animals moving in groups like that?’

Ruik looked at the cows, pigs, and chickens that were flocking together in doubt. But what was more surprising was...

‘The pigs and cows are smiling?’

...the animals were smiling happily as if they were going on a picnic. Some of the pigs were even twitching their hips happily as they ran. That was when Ruik found a man from a distance. The man, who was wearing a hat that covered half of his face while chewing on hay, was riding on top of a mamboth, an elephant-type monster. His legs were even crossed leisurely on top of the monster.

“Meeeeeeeeeh~”

“Moooooooooooo~”

“Hwiiiiik! Oink, oink, oink!”

The man looked like the epitome of someone raising livestock.

‘Is he someone that can communicate with animals? That’s amazing,’ Ruik thought in admiration. The man was definitely someone with unusual ability.

“Hmm. What should we do?”

Ruik shook his head at Rucado’s question and said, “Wait until he passes by before we advance again.”

“Eh? We’re not killing them? Those monsters, cows, pigs, and chickens will be worth a fortune if we can catch them and sell them.”

“Are you telling me that you can catch all of the livestock that will escape the moment we touch them? That’s just like announcing to all of Atlas that we came to attack them.”

“I see.”

Ruik was very wise. He was sure that the thousands of soldiers that were with him would be thrown into chaos if they tried to catch the animals that would possibly escape all over the place. The best course of action for them was letting them pass quietly.

Ruik and his troops continued to hide in the bushes as they waited for the flock of animals to pass.

‘I guess he’s a special livestock farmer.’

Someone as strong as Ruik could feel the aura that this opponent released and estimate how much power they had. There were only two cases where he could not detect their aura and power.

‘Someone that’s more powerful than me.’

.

However, finding someone that was more powerful than Ruik was like finding a needle in a haystack. Ruik might be at the bottom of the ring among the Sword of Gods, but he could still feel the aura and power of the second and third-ranked Swords. The only person among the Swords that

he could not feel the aura of was the first, the most powerful Sword, and the emperor of God's Empire.

As for the second case, it was those that have weak abilities and mana. He could not feel their energy, but he could sense some signs.

Slowly but surely, the herd of animals passed by them. The animals looked as if they were still going on a picnic. But then, just as the man passed by Ruik, the man pushed his hat with his index finger and murmured, "This should be the best timing, right?"

"...?!"

After leaving those words, the man jumped down from the mammoth with a 'Ha!' before stretching his body.

'It can't be, right...?' Ruik frowned. The man's words just now sounded very much like 'It's going to be difficult if I don't do it now, right?'

'I can't even read anything from him!'

He completely denied the fact that he could not detect the man's aura. However, Ruik thought that it was best to verify if his conjectures were right. So, he called for Roden, the pride of Barras Kingdom, "Roden."

"Yes, commander."

"Use your beast to scare them off."

"I understand."

Roden was Barras Kingdom's royal summoner. All of his summons were beastly predators, ranging from tigers, leopards, lions to hyenas, at around Level 480! On top of that, he could train and evolve these beasts.

Generally, beasts would not be able to exert enough power to rival that of soldiers and knights. However, Roden's beasts were different. In the first place, would someone even believe that a beast could reach Level 480? Furthermore, Roden could summon hundreds of them at one time, a feat that made him the representative of all the summoners in Barras Kingdom.

'We can just pretend that these beasts have suddenly appeared to attack the livestock and see how he will react.'

There was no helping it. He had to test this man and see if he really could not read his signs, or it was just a coincidence. They had to do it even if Atlas noticed their existence. After all, the man looked just like someone that was relaxing with the animals, right?

Then, Roden summoned a hundred of his beasts. The beasts prowled around the bushes, like hunters watching their prey. Although these beasts looked normal from the outside, they were completely different from the ordinary beasts. But five minutes later...

"...!"

Ruik and Roden's eyes widened in disbelief as they watched the incredulous scene unfold in front of their very eyes. Then, Roden heard the following notifications:

[You have lost ownership of the Brave Tiger.]

[You have lost ownership of the Brave Leopard.]

[You have lost ownership of the Brave Hyena.]

[You have lost ownership of the Brave Lion.]

Something incredibly ridiculous was definitely happening in front of both Ruik and Roden!

Chapter 434: Start of War

“What the hell is going on?!”

Ruik had never seen such a ridiculous thing in his life. No, he just could not bring himself to believe in the sight in front of him. Just a few moments ago, the hundred Brave Beasts that Roden had carefully bred and raised for a very long time suddenly acted all cute and cuddly with the mysterious livestock farmer. The most shocking part?

“Hohoho. Yo! Such cuties! Sit!”

The beasts followed his command and sat obediently.

“My ownership of all of the beasts has been taken away...!”

“That's completely ridiculous...”

Who on earth was that man? It was beyond Ruik's comprehension. However, there was one thing that he was sure of. The man in front of them definitely had extraordinary power.

‘We have to eliminate him right away if he's a part of Let's Eat Sect.’

It was the only way to avoid any troubles in the future.

Shiiiiing—

At that moment, Ruik decided to step forward. He was someone that everyone had said would be a Continental Swordmaster when he grew up. However, they were wrong. After receiving the Gods' summons and serving them, he had grown far stronger than the land's Continental Swordmaster.

Ruik swung his sword and sent out dozens of gigantic sword lights, like a rainstorm on a dark and cold night, towards the man.

Piiiiiiiiiiing—

Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiing—

Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiing—

But then, something very surprising happened. The man threw several of the ‘livestock blankets’ covering the cows' backs in the air. The very same livestock blankets that were made of straw that were used to cover the cows and pigs' backs to protect them from clothes. And...

‘He, he knew that I was here?!’

The man being aware of Ruik’s existence and the fact that Ruik could not read any signs from him brought chills down his spine. This meant that the man in front of him was a step above him. However, even if that was the case, him throwing the ‘livestock blankets’ above their heads was incomprehensible. But then...

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

...the livestock blankets fluttering above them acted as shields and blocked all of Ruik’s attacks.

“...?!”

Ruik, despite being stronger than a Continental Swordmaster, felt his breath stagnate at the sight. His attack had been blocked by the livestock blanket.

‘The, the livestock blanket...?!’

However, the surprise did not end there.

“Grrrrrrrrrr!”

“Graaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!”

The sound of a dog growling rang right behind Ruik. When he turned around, he saw a weird three-headed dog with epaulets saying ‘Woof-woof Unit’s Leader’. There were also hundreds of what seemed to be abandoned puppies with cows, pigs, chickens, ducks, some monsters, and mysterious people wearing ragged clothes while holding farming tools. These people were none other than the Hybrid Race.

“What the hell...?”

Ruik was flustered mainly because he had not felt their presence as they crept up behind him. There were even 7,000 of them in total, with around 2,000 human troops and 5,000 livestock. However, what Ruik could not understand was why these animals were here. And then...

“Graaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!”

“Graaaaaaaaaaaa!”

...the weird and mysterious three-headed dog, the leader of the Woof-woof Unit, rushed forward.

‘They’re not who they think they are, right?’

Hell’s Gatekeeper, Cerberus! This was the identity of the leader of the Woof-woof Unit. However, Ruik denied this. There was no way that Hell’s Gatekeeper would be the leader of the abandoned puppies!

While Ruik was lost in thought, one of the heads of the Woof-woof Unit's Leader let out a breath of flame and attacked him.

"Get ready to attack!"

"Yes, sir!"

And the same was true for the players, they were as flustered as Ruik, despite already knowing the identity of this dog. They knew that they were Hell's Gatekeeper Cerberus! They were Love, Hope, and Happiness that always paired with Locke! And this very same Cerberus was now the leader of all the abandoned puppies.

'How in the world...?'

'Is Player Minhyuk really out of his mind?'

'I can't believe that such a powerful monster, the Cerberus, is now the leader of all the abandoned puppies!'

When these thoughts flashed in their heads, the farmers, holding their farming tools, rushed forward.

'It seems like their territory really has a shortage of troops.'?

'They're bringing in farmers to fight?!'

'Are they using these farmers to get more time? Did someone in Atlas notice something? Or are they just farmers that are farming nearby?'

The truth was, the abandoned puppies, who were tasked to do scouting, had already noticed them with their sharp sense of smell and hearing and ran to inform the people about an enemy invasion. Atlas was already in full-battle mode the moment they arrived here. Even the members of Let's Eat Sect were gathering as quickly as they could after learning about the identity of the intruders.

And the ones that came out to stop them were Brod, the Let's Eat Sect's commander-in-chief, and Elpis, Let's Eat Sect's shield.

"Kkiing, kiiing, kiiing!"

"Kkiing, kkiing!"

Cerberus shrieked and whimpered after being hit by Ruik's graceful swordsmanship. Then, Ruik looked around after striking back at them.

'All we have to do is deal with that mysterious livestock farmer. The farmers and livestock are just here to drag the time.'

Then, he looked at the farmers and livestock that created a commotion among them. All he could think of was how strange the sight was. How could these animals fight with these men?! This fact was both strange and shocking. But then, something more ridiculous happened.

Bang, bang, bang!

Just when the Barras Kingdom troops were about to land an attack on the Hybrids, the chickens flew up and pecked their troops on the face.

“Cluck, cluck!”

“Ugh, aaaaaaack! What the hell!”

With the soldier’s vision blocked, one of the farmers used their sickle and cut off the soldier’s arm. And it did not end there! The bodies of the cows that were rushing forward suddenly flashed brightly! And when the cows collided with the shield of the soldiers that were standing in a defensive formation...

Baaaaaaaaang—

The soldiers, together with their shields, flew back and slammed to the ground. Their heads turned dizzy and they were unable to come back to their senses, after being hit by a huge force akin to a bomb explosion. Then, the Hybrids and the horses also joined the fray.

Thump!

“Euaaaaaaack!”

Thuuuuuump—

The soldiers’ armors were blown to pieces with every kick from the horses’ hind legs. The longer they fought, the stronger the livestock grew.

[Oinky 3 has leveled up.]

[Cow 14 has leveled up.]

[Cluck-cluck 1004 has leveled up.]

The livestock continued to grow stronger as they hunted their enemies that were above their level.

‘What the hell...?! The level of this territory’s livestock is high enough to fight against the elites of the Barras Kingdom?!’

Even if Ruik was looking at reality, he really just could not bring himself to understand what was wrong with this territory. There were even ducks flying like hawks in the sky above them. These ducks suddenly opened their mouths and spat hundreds of mysterious beads. Then, at that moment...

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

“Aaaaaaaaaaargh!”

“Keheooooook!”

“Aaaaaaaaaaack!”

The hundreds of beads rained down on the troops and caused huge explosions, effectively incapacitating the soldiers.

‘They have bombs in their mouths?!’

However, that thinking was completely wrong. The ducks took off to the skies once again. And just like before, beads started to fall from their mouths again.

“Avoid those beads!!!”

“Those bombs will shave off 20% of your HP!”

“What the hell is that?!”

When Ruik looked at the bombs that were coming out of the ducks’ mouths, he realized...

‘They did not bring those.’

...that they made it. Which meant...

‘A... a skill?!’

Indeed, that was the correct answer. The beads that the ducks held in their mouth were created by their own skills. Then, the beads fell down on the ground and caused another set of explosions. After the explosion, the ducks descended on the ground and pecked the soldiers with their beaks. Although their beaks were not pointed, they were as strong as an eagle’s beak, to the point that they could dig into and rip the flesh of the soldiers. Some would even attack the soldiers’ eyes and dig them out.

“Hiiiiiiiiik!”

“My eyes! My eyeeeeeeeeees!”

Meanwhile, on the other side. One of the soldiers of Barras Kingdom stood face to face with a pomeranian that was trembling in fright. Although the pomeranian was shivering, its eyes remained wide and bright as it looked up at the soldier and tilted its head cutely.

“It’s dangerous here. Quick, go somewhere else...!”

The soldier just briefly interacted with the pomeranian but...

Stab—

...the Hybrid, who owned the pomeranian, took this moment to stab the soldier with his spear from behind.

“Keuaaaaaaaack!”

Grin—

A vicious smile curled at the corners of the pomeranian’s mouth. What the pomeranian executed was none other than the beauty trap tactic. Worrying about the puppies in the middle of the battlefield was incredibly ridiculous and impossible.

However, the puppies had the skill ‘Powerful Temptation’, a completely shocking skill that could force their opponent to pay attention to them and let them fall into a daze for a few seconds.

“Kghhk...”

Ruik helplessly supported his forehead with his palm.

‘What the hell is this?! They’re a mess!’

He was both bewildered and shocked by the strange and unfamiliar battlefield. However, not long after, he regained his calm. Ruik quickly looked at his surroundings.

‘The animals and farmers have developed shocking powers and abilities. However, we can minimize the damage on our side and advance forward if I intervene.’

After all, they were just playing a small sortie with them. These farmers and animals would be no match against them if they fought seriously since he was here. First, Ruik had to get rid of the livestock farmer in front of him as quickly as he could. When Ruik turned to look at the livestock farmer again, he saw him approaching Barras Kingdom’s elite summoners.

“Hohoho! If you don’t want to get beat up, take out your summons. You have to take out at least a hundred, otherwise I’ll beat you up.”

“Hiiiiik!”

He was actually extorting the summoners. This was a common sight in a fight. However, he really hit the summoners that refused to do his bidding. No, to be exact, they had no choice but to call for their summons even if they did not want to. After all, after getting hit once, they were sent flying back. And once they summoned their monsters...

“Oh my. My babies~ Come, let’s go with daddy.”

“Keuaaack! Keuack! Keuack!”

“Grrrr? Grr, grr, grr!”

The monsters would be wary of him at first, but in the end, they would still approach him and remain by his side.

‘H... How the hell did he do that...?!’

Only then did Ruik learn of the man’s identity. From what he had witnessed, this man had inherited the power of the God of Livestock, Aevalin. He was sure since he had seen Aevalin a few times in the Land of the Gods. After all, he was free to visit the God’s Empire there. And he could clearly remember Aevalin because...

‘Aevalin is one of the few gods that hasn’t chosen any heir yet.’

...she was a God without an heir. Also, she had the power to attract any kind of livestock or monster.

‘Is that why I can’t detect any signs from him?’

That should not be the case at all. However, God of Livestock Aevalin was a part of the Higher Gods, an existence that was completely different from the god that Ruik served, the ‘God of Swordsmanship’ who was a part of the Lower Gods.

‘He’s someone from God’s Empire? No, he does not belong there.’

Ruik thought that was impossible. After all, the people from God's Empire would never attack him. However, there was one thing that he was sure of.

'It's not because he's strong. It's because God Aevalin's protection is hiding his signs and preventing me from reading them.'

Just because he was a God's Sword that served a Higher God did not mean that he would be stronger than Ruik. Besides, it would not matter even if he was or he was not a Sword of God's Empire. Ruik had already decided to kill him as fast as he could.

But then, at that moment, Brod picked up a sword that was lying on the ground and said, "The damage that you have brought upon my children is immeasurable. My heart aches for them."

Brod, who saw the livestock fighting desperately, thought that he had no time to dilly-dally like this. The sword that he held in his hand was nothing more than an ordinary sword that was used by soldiers but the skill that he used was a pinnacle swordsmanship, and he was the man that was hailed as the continent's mercenary king.

"Mercenary's Pinnacle Swordsmanship, Final Chapter."

A powerful red energy poured out and wrapped around Brod's sword until they formed the image of hundreds of ferocious wolves. And with a swing of Brod's sword, these hundreds of wolves dashed forward towards the enemy troops. And once the skill was fully cast...

"Wolf's Destruction."

Shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwaa!

Blood spurted out everywhere the hundred wolves passed by. Defense and armor? High HP? The players' defensive skills? Everything was useless in front of these wolves that could ignore 100% of their enemies defenses and even invoke Break Armor! The soldiers that were struck sustained grave injuries and fell.

Fall—

Fall—

Fall—

Fall—

Fall—

Then, Brod said, "Oh no... I should have left some guys so my children can level up..."

Then, he turned to look at Ruik.

"Hey, you..."

Ruik gulped in nervousness. He could feel his mouth turn dry from trepidation. He had never felt this in his life. But the man's next words were very shocking.

"Summon your monsters or pets if you have one. Also make sure to make your summoners summon a thousand each."

“...”

Ruik, someone that lived in the Land of the Gods, the Sword of the God's Empire, a man that had a power far stronger than any Continental Swordmaster, was being extorted by the man in front of him with fists raised high up in the sky.

Chapter 435: The Ones that Gathered

Ares felt both dread and disbelief as hell on earth unfolded in front of him. The bodies of the dead soldiers that died under the hands of Death and his Death Legion piled up like a mountain all around him. The rankers tried to attack him and his liches, but it was not an easy feat.

‘What kind of monster is he...?!’

Death had nearly wiped out the 4,000 troops that came with Ares, all by himself. There were only around 300 of his troops left, and Death was still laughing and cackling in a grating manner.

‘His MP should be running out soon. By then, his undead will have disappeared already.’

It did not matter how strong Death was, there was no way for him to summon the undead continuously. He even used the ‘Undead's Resurrection’ on the Barras Kingdom troops to bring them back to life and make them attack their comrades. The Undead Resurrection was a skill that consumed a lot of MP. The Death Knights that were summoned and rampaging around right now were also consuming a lot of his MP.

Finally, what Ares had hoped for, happened.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Death's thousands of troops in the Death Legion disappeared one after the other in streams of black energy, even those that have been resurrected with his Undead's Resurrection had also disappeared. In fact, Death only had at most 7% of his MP left, and he could only maintain three Death Knights with him.

‘If I use Draining Dead, I might be able to fight again.’

Draining Dead was one of the Immortal class' skills. It was a skill that recovered mana and replenished his MP by sucking in and draining the remaining mana in the bodies of the dead. The only problem was that it had a long casting time, and it was very difficult to use during a battle. Right now, after the black stream of energy disappeared, only around three Death Knights and twelve skeleton knights were left.

“Keuha, keuhahahahaha!”

Ares burst out laughing after feeling relief. A one man kingdom had defeated 4,000 strong troops that included many of the best rankers of the country. They even have the elite soldiers of Barras Kingdom with them. Losing against a single player would bring them unimaginable shame and disgrace. Fortunately, they now had the chance to make up for their shame.

“In the end, I'll be able to take your neck,” Ares said as he led the surviving rankers and elite troops forward.

Death's remaining undead were all staggering and creaking because their wounds and injuries failed to recover, since he had not been supplying them with enough MP.

'One more time... I will never let you go to Atlas.'

It was because his first friend was there. Even though Death's mental power was already at its limit, he still stood firm.

'I wonder if they arrived safely in the territory?'

A subtle smile curled at the corner of his lips at the thought of the transportation convoy from Rocard Kingdom! Death hoped that they arrived safely.

The remaining three Death Knights and Skeleton Knights dashed forward to stop the incoming 300 enemy troops. But they were useless. The exhausted Death Knights' skulls were easily smashed down by the enemy's axe. Ares' fists slammed into one of the Death Knights' body thirty two times in a row, which turned it into a powder. Even the Skeleton Knights failed to withstand the attacks from the kingdoms' elite soldiers.

Death gripped his scythe tightly as he cut down the incoming enemy soldiers one after the other.

"Keuaaaack!"

"Keheooooook!"

Death looked like he was dancing as he cut down his enemies like crazy. Despite being exhausted, he still stood his ground.

"Kekekekekeke! Hahahahahaha! Ahihihihih!"

Death laughed maniacally amidst his falling enemies while their blood splattered on his face. He looked completely like a mindless murderer, with his face soaked in blood and his white teeth peeking from the gaps of his eerie smile. However, not long after, a spear stabbed into Death's back.

"Urk!"

Ares thought that it was worth watching. The elite royal soldiers would, in the end, trample on the ranker that created the greatest topic during the Athenae: World War.

"Urk!" Death spat out a mouthful of blood. But despite his trembling body, he still cut down the elite soldiers that tried to approach him. And finally...

Slaaaash—

A hand axe flew over his shoulder and broke his Bone Armor. The blow forced Death to fall down on one knee, hand clutching his injured shoulder. Then, one of the elite soldiers raised his sword to cut his neck off. But then...

Creaaaaak—

...a strange root popped up from the ground as it wrapped the soldier's hand tightly.

"Ugh, ugh...!"

No matter how much the soldier struggled, he could not break free from the root. The exhausted Death turned around only to see the hundreds of people that made up the transportation convoy that he had just told earlier to flee. And they looked furious as they rushed forward.

“Get your hands off of him!”

“Don’t even dare to think about touching a single strand of his hair! We won’t let you off!!!”

They rushed forward and clashed against the soldiers.

“Keuhahahahahahaha! Do you think you’ll be a match for the kingdom’s soldiers?!” Ares laughed loudly, finding this situation very funny.

But then, something very strange happened.

Bam—

One of the men brandished his heavy iron mace and blew away an elite kingdom soldier. Every time the farmer grandma swung her hands, roots would spring up and trap the soldiers and bring them down to their knees.

The elite kingdom soldiers were already exhausted. However, these farmers were not. On top of that, they were also the Hybrid Race, a race born with far superior DNA to humans. All of the people of their kingdom were soldiers and were no less than the elite soldiers of the Barras Kingdom.

In just a blink, they had broken through the gaps of the Barras Kingdom soldiers, dragged Death away from them, and brought him inside their own protective circle.

“Die!!!”

Ares was also exhausted. At some point, he had also run out of MP to the point where he could not use a single skill anymore. However, he still took the lead as he punched his way through the Hybrids.

Death spat out another mouthful of blood as he watched Ares approach. He said, “I told you to run...”

The one that was supporting Death was the father of one of the Rocard Knights that he had killed. He was one of the people that always trampled on him and killed him to vent his anger.

“Shut up! We’re just keeping you alive because we want you to die at our hands, and not at theirs!”

“Death. You have to die an agonizingly painful death in our hands!”

Although those were the words that they said, Death could feel the warmth from their voices and could not help but smile. However, Ares and the rankers were still very powerful. The Hybrids fell down one after another while shrieking in pain. But then...

Baaaaaaaang—

A man suddenly appeared in between them and the enemy troops. Both of the man's hands held axes that he used to cut the enemies approaching the Hybrids.

“Lo... Locke?!”

That was right. It was Crazy Priest Locke.

The enemies were now in a state of complete exhaustion. On the other hand, Locke, who had just entered the battlefield, was still lively and energetic. He was too powerful for the exhausted Ares and other rankers, who could not even reach the top 1,000 in the rankings.

Slash—

Locke's axes split Ares' head and dealt with the enemies that approached them.

“...”

Fall—

Locke remained silent as he looked at Death, who ended up collapsing anyway. Locke was one of the few people that were reluctant to befriend and trust Death. However, looking at the situation right now...

‘Death protected Atlas Territory.’

Death fell after the battle ended. This just showed how much he struggled earlier and how desperate he was. And when Locke turned to look around...

‘Crazy...’

He could not believe it. Was this really the work of a single person? The number of enemies that Death had cut down was beyond anyone's imagination.

Today was the day that Death had created the legend of fighting 4,000 troops alone.

The capital of Barras Kingdom was crowded with a huge number of troops, enough to fill the plaza. Their numbers easily exceeded 70,000. At this point in time, the players could already guess that Barras Kingdom was definitely preparing for war! And not long after, a notification rang for the players residing in Barras Kingdom.

: Punishing Let's Eat Sect.]

“Am... amazing!”

“It’s a Let’s Eat Sect Punishment Quest!”

“If not now, when else will we have the opportunity to hit Let’s Eat Sect?!”

Let’s Eat Sect was, without a doubt, the best guild in Korea. They owned two powerful territories and had plenty of rankers and Named NPCs. They were the subject of everyone’s envy. And this envy could change into something else in an instant.

The novices and ordinary players were beyond thrilled at the thought of being able to hunt and take them down with their numbers, a feat that was otherwise impossible for them.

Plenty of players participated in the Let’s Eat Sect Punishment Quest. As a result, the number of troops gathered in Barras Kingdom soon increased from 70,000 to 120,000. Of course, the number of novices and non-combat classes among them were quite considerable. However, with their number, they thought that it was definitely worth a try.

King Grain, who was standing on top of the walls, looked at the countless troops gathered on the plaza and raised his sword high up in the sky.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

A loud roar rang loudly in the world.

The Athenae Community was boiling.

[Guys, are you participating in the Let’s Eat Sect Punishment Quest? Isn’t the deal extremely good? As long as we can kill a ranker and pick up their artifacts, then we’ll be able to hit the jackpot, right? Do you agree?]

[And it’s not only that. We’ll hit the jackpot even if we just pick up the artifacts that the people around us drop.]

[If we don’t join this quest, when else will we be able to get the opportunity to mess with the Let’s Eat Sect?]

[No matter how strong the Let’s Eat Sect is, it would be impossible for them to stop 120,000 troops, right?]

[Many top rankers from our country will also participate in this quest. Is there a chance that the Let’s Eat Sect Punishment Quest will continue even if we destroy Atlas and Valhalla?]

[I did not expect that quick progress and development will also be poison someday.]

The players were all excited for this new event-type quest and the number of players that flocked to Barras Kingdom continued to increase by the day.

The truth was they had been blinded by their huge numbers that they did not even imagine seeing a big fight ahead of them. It was also because they had no way of knowing that Let's Eat Sect were allied with Death and Rocard Kingdom, and that they had hidden powers.

Many people were gathering in a secret basement somewhere in Barras Kingdom. The basement was huge and dark, but only a few candles had been lit. The man that had been welcoming the guests in this basement was Lauvredo, a knight that once dreamt of becoming Barras Kingdom's Knight Commander.

The very same man that had been saved by Talmor's Paladin Corr from his baldness just a few months prior.

Chapter 436: The Ones that Gathered

Lauvredo personally greeted and shook the hands of the people that entered the basement, "Oh my, you came. Brother, your hair looks very thick today."

"Haha. Brother Lauvredo, I heard that you will be the leader of the Talmor Branch here in Barras Kingdom?"

Lauvredo gently placed his hands together and looked up at the sky, before saying, "Everything will happen according to the will of Lord Talmor, right?"

"Hahahahaha! That abundant and thick hair of yours is proof of your solid belief and loyalty."

The men that stood behind him and the door were all 'believers' saved by Talmor. Surprisingly, there were many players among them.

'This place they call Talmor is really amazing.'

'Although we can't grow hair in real life, Talmor has become our hope!'

The players joined them in hopes that hair-loss treatment would also be developed in reality someday.

After everyone had gathered together, Lauvredo's eyes took on a sharp glint. He was once the deputy knight commander of the kingdom. However, the kingdom had practically abandoned him and his troops. And now, he was going to fight for this new place that accepted him. He looked at the crowd, which exceeded a thousand, that had gathered in front of him, as he clenched his fist that was holding his sword.

"We can expect Barras Kingdom to strike Let's Eat Sect's territory, the place where Talmor is located, soon."

"How impertinent!"

"How dare they attack the sacred place that houses Talmor!!!"

“Talmor is the greatest god!!!”

All of their heads were covered with silky and thick black hair, just like Terrius. Then, Lauvredo opened the secret letter that he had received through a carrier pigeon and declared, “Our fellow believer in Eivelis Empire said that he has gathered around 2,000 troops. And that’s not all. There are also around 1,500 troops crossing the border and joining us from Collodis Empire.”

If they included that number in their ranks, then the number of troops gathered for Talmor would be around 5,000.

“Talmor has given us a new lease in life. We must protect Talmor!”

“That’s right!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!”

“Long live Talmor!!! Our Lord Talmor forever!!!”

“Now, let us all sing together!”

“Talmor Fati! *Fweet, fweet, fweet, fweet!*”

“Talmor Fati! *Fweet, fweet, fweet, fweet!*”

“Talmor Fati! *Fweet, fweet, fweet, fweet!*”

Everyone sang the Talmor’s hymn passionately. And by the end of their song, Lauvredo plucked a strand of hair from his head.

‘Aaaaaaaah. Th... that...!’

‘I can’t believe it... he pulled out a strand of hair from his head... his hair that is more important than his life...!’

Then, Lauvredo said, “This is a token that represents our will and determination. Everyone, pull out a strand of your hair.”

Some would choose to cut their fingers and use their blood to show their firm will and determination. But for them, their hair was more than that. It was a representation of their life. Despite the tears welling up in their eyes, they still plucked a strand of hair from their heads.

“*Sob, sob, sob...*”

“My dear hair, goodbye...”

Lauvredo gently and politely placed his strand of hair together with the thousands of strands of hair gathered in front of him. He could feel their strong will through these strands of hair.

“For Talmor!”

“For Talmor!”

“For the great Talmor!”

Soldiers and troops from all over the continent stood up and took arms for the sake of protecting Talmor.

The Dragon Palace, located deep within the Dragon King's sea, had undergone a lot of changes. Ever since the Great Mage Arfield incident, where the Dragon King almost lost both his home and his life, he made sure to make his troops undergo hellish training, which resulted in a far stronger army than before.

And now, someone was rushing to the palace. With two long ears, fluffy and pristine white fur, and a twitching tail, Kiari, the rabbitman, furiously hopped along while shouting, "Dragon King! More than a hundred thousand troops from the Barras Kingdom are marching towards Mister Minhyuk's territory, Atlas!"

A solemn and grave expression flashed by the Dragon King's catfish face, as he sat with his golden king's robe and listened to Kiari's words.

Who was Minhyuk? He was their benefactor, the hero that saved their Dragon Palace when they were in a crisis. Not too long ago, Minhyuk had paid them a visit and asked them if they could lend him some of their strength. Back then, the Dragon King only gave Minhyuk a vague answer and Minhyuk just laughed it off.

'It's alright even if you choose not to help me! I love this place that is filled with a lot of delicious things!' Minhyuk said before taking a lot of 'Sea Honey' and going home.

The reason why the Dragon King could only give Minhyuk a vague answer was because the beings residing in the Dragon King's Sea had never meddled in human affairs, especially in fights between them.

But Minhyuk was not like the other humans. He was the one that saved his life and his entire palace.

"Kiari, Jevis, Radin."

The Dragon King's children all knelt down on one knee.

"Let us help him just as he had helped us before."

Both Kiari and Jevis smiled brightly after hearing the words of the Dragon King. Then, they started to rally the Dragon King's Sea Troops, including the shark race, a race of bipeds with shark heads, the blue whale race, a race that grew to a height of seven meters and was known to be the Dragon King's shield.

There was also the Dragon King, himself, an existence that grew stronger despite being known as someone that was more powerful than any Named NPC in existence. His power now could rival or even best the Supreme NPCs.

More than 5,000 Dragon King's Sea Troops went ashore under the command of the Dragon King and headed for Atlas. After walking for a day, they met another 5,000 strong troops on the way. The one that was leading this army was sitting on top of a white warhorse with a hood covering most of his face. However, despite his face being covered, the presence of the leader's pointed ears could not be hidden at all.

The Dragon King and his children stepped forward first. The leader of the unknown troops also stepped forward with his warhorse before removing the hood that covered most of his face. The Dragon King was very familiar with the face of the man in front of him.

“Gorn.”

That was right. The man was none other than Gorn, the king of elves, the elves’ absolute ruler that had sat on his throne for hundreds of years! And the one right next to him was Aragon, the prince of Elvenheim and the elf known to have the best archery skill in elven history.

The truth was, the elven race and the seafolk did not have that close of a relationship. In fact, they were hostile to each other. In the past, during the reign of the previous Dragon King and the previous Elven King, the Dragon King asked for the help of the elven race when their Dragon King’s Sea was put in a crisis.

However, the previous Elven King rejected his request. Fortunately, the Dragon King’s Sea restored its peace and averted the crisis. But ever since that time, the seafolk and the elven race had grown hostile with each other.

The Dragon King and Elf King Gorn stood face to face for a very long time. Both the Sea Troops and the Elven Troops standing behind them were wondering if a war would break out between the two of them.

The one that broke the silence was Elf King Gorn. He said, “It seems like we both came out for the same reason?”

“Are you talking about this guy that can eat as much as an elephant, Gorn? If you’re talking about that, then we really did come out for the same reason.”

Both Elf King Gorn and the Dragon King looked at each other silently with small smiles curling at the corners of their lips as they slowly inched towards each other.

“It seems like a new wind will come forth.”

“Perhaps, our intervention will make him stronger. This time, we might be able to witness the birth of an emperor that would rule the entire continent.”

“If he becomes the continent’s emperor, then I will be very delighted to have witnessed it first hand.”

Then, the two of them grabbed each other’s hand in a handshake. Just like that, over 10,000 troops, comprising of the Dragon King’s Sea’s Troops and the Elven Army, began to march forward together.

Eid Territory, a territory under the spear master Marquis Bard located in Eivelis Empire.

Marquis Bard looked out of his window and watched the cold rain pattering outside while recalling the past.

‘Master.’

Born in a world where spearmanship had always been ignored in favor of swordsmanship, they met a great man in the form of Ghost Spear Ben, the father of all the spearmen in the continent and their master.

Bard was an ordinary man, he was not born a genius. But with the teaching and training hidden under great scoldings from Ghost Spear Ben, he had grown out of his mold of just being the son of a baronet knight and became who he was now, a marquis.

The truth was, Marquis Bard felt happy when Ghost Spear Ben came to visit him not too long ago, even if it was to make him bury his head on the ground.

‘Master is still alive and well...!’

Some of the stories that he had heard about Ben’s feats sounded more like a legend to his ears. However, for the longest time, he believed that Ghost Spear Ben had died and went after his son. But after seeing his hearty and lively appearance, Bard realized that it was just a baseless rumor that the people that hated him spread around.

‘Bury your head.’

Ben’s words shook his heart that had long gone stagnant. Bard, after becoming a marquis and standing in a high position, had gone lazy in his spearmanship training.

Crackle! Bang, bang!

Thunder and lightning cracked and fell down from the sky as cold rain continued to fall down.

“Aide.”

“Yes, Marquis.”

“I’m going to Louvide Village for a small break.”

“I understand, my lord.”

After leaving those words to his aide, Marquis Bard moved. He quietly wore an asura mask and covered his head with the hood of his dark robe as he walked inside the forest. And when he stopped in the middle of the dark forest...

Crackle! Bang, bang!

Thunder and lightning cracked once again, illuminating thousands of spearmen with fierce momentum and firm determination lined up in front of him. All of them stood under the cold rain wearing asura masks that were sent by Marquis Bard.

“Our father is facing danger.”

Murderous intent flashed in everyone’s eyes. He was a legend, and at the same time, he was also their father and an old man that sometimes would get angry at them. Still, the fact that he was the idol of all the spearmen would never change!

“According to my intel, around 150,000 troops from Barras Kingdom have already gathered together and are marching towards the territory where our father is residing.”

Despite the cold rain pouring down on their body, the powerful voice made their hearts tremble, as their will and determination burned brightly.

“There is a high chance that we will die in this endeavor. But the moment we wear this mask, we are no longer nobles, merchants, wealthy people, nor some knight somewhere. We might even die without receiving any glory and honor. However...”

Bard looked around.

“...we must take our weapons and fight because we are his children.”

“For Ghost Spear Ben!”

“For our legend!”

“If it’s for our master, I willingly give up my heart!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Loud and fiery shouts rang loudly in the otherwise silent forest.

Just like that, another 2,000 strong troops began their march towards Atlas Territory. All of these were the result of the kindness and great character that the man named Minhyuk and the vassals that worked under him had shown these people.

Chapter 437: The Ones that Gathered

Sword Emperor Ellie was sporting a cold expression on her face as she watched the kingdom’s envoys lying prostrate in front of her. Each of these envoys were influential people that had titles at least at marquis-rank and were sent by the kings of their own kingdoms.

“Your Majesty Ellie! Please do not forget your alliance with our kingdom!”

“Let’s Eat Sect is growing in power by each passing day and will definitely pose a threat to you someday, Your Majesty!”

“Six kingdoms have already made a consensus. They all refused to participate in this war.”

“Your Majesty Ellie, please consider your alliance with our kingdoms! Although Let’s Eat Sect’s Lord Minhyuk is friends with you, Your Majesty, he is still an existence that we are bound to be afraid of!”

Ellie continued to sit on her throne with her legs crossed, with a cold and dangerous glint in her eyes as she watched them grumble and cry. The envoys sent by each of the kingdoms allied with them were asking for Eivelis Empire to not participate in the war between Barras Kingdom and the Let’s Eat Sect. And no matter how much of a frank and straight-forward person Ellie was, she had to take this matter seriously and carefully.

After all, these kingdoms also traded with her empire. Of course, Eivelis Empire was above them but if she decided to abandon them, then her empire would suffer a huge blow.

If she decided to cut off their alliance with the kingdom that supplied and traded iron ore with them, then their weapons and agricultural tools would stop production and they would be left with nothing to farm and fend for themselves. If their transactions with the kingdoms that traded grains and fruits with them got cut off then her people would go hungry. Although her empire stood on top of all the kingdoms and empires, being in the same continent meant that she had to take into consideration the system and chains that linked them together.

As a response to their pleas, Ellie said, "I will grant your request."

"We're very grateful and honored, Your Majesty!"

Vile and vicious smiles adorned the faces of the kingdoms' envoys as they bowed in front of Ellie. If Barras Kingdom devoured the Let's Eat Sect then they would grow immensely. However, King Grain had given them a promise that he would give them as much as what he would give to each of the kingdoms' royal families. Besides, even if Eivelis Empire seized more power, they would not be able to go against the empire anyway. However, Barras Kingdom was different.

'Foolish King Grain. We will definitely take over your kingdom once you devour the Let's Eat Sect.'

With this request that Ellie had granted to them, they would be able to happily divide the torn and broken Barras Kingdom some day. The envoys' hips twitched happily as they walked out of the audience hall after Ellie had dismissed them.

"Ellie will not send troops in the war right?"

"She will not send them. Her people will be indignant if the emperor of a great empire like her would go out for just a single person."

That was right. Even if Ellie and Minhyuk were close, the fact that Minhyuk was just a single individual would not change. Why would an empress like her risk the lives of her troops just for a single person alone? On top of that, Barras Kingdom was allied with Eivelis Empire. If Eivelis Empire chose to abandon Barras Kingdom, then the empire would also lose their ties with their kingdoms. Just as they were chuckling about their deeds while they made their way back to their own kingdoms...

Grin—

...Ellie grinned widely.

'Do you think you can devour Barras Kingdom by yourselves?'

King Grain had grown stupid. His kingdom could not even make a name for themselves anymore as their own power grew weaker by the day. Perhaps it was his own foolishness that brought the Barras Kingdom and made it into a weak kingdom like it was now. Ellie was a very clever emperor. She knew that they would tear Barras Kingdom apart by the end of it all.

'Even if you did not come here, I did not intend to move my army at all.'

The smile curled at the corner of Ellie's lips widened even further. She knew that none of these kingdoms would recognize Minhyuk and Let's Eat Sect if she helped them defeat Barras Kingdom. In fact, Minhyuk and Ellie met and had tea together not too long ago.

‘Noona, you have to cheer for me as hard as you can once the wind blows over our way!’
Minhyuk said as he flashed her a bright and wide smile.

Minhyuk also knew that his Let’s Eat Kingdom would be criticized and shamed forever if they became a kingdom with the help of the continent’s most powerful empire. They would even have a hard time having diplomatic discussions with other kingdoms if that happened.

Back then, Ellie smiled and said, *‘Alright. I will make sure to do my best and cheer for you.’*

‘I’m going to thank you in advance for your energetic cheers!’

After recalling their conversation, Ellie stood up from her throne and walked to where Aide Ruth was waiting. Then, Ruth handed over what seemed to be a black slime to her. Not long after, the slime that could fit on the palm of Ruth’s hand suddenly grew as big as him before clinging on Ellie’s body. A few moments later, the black slime separated from her body and formed another figure. The figure that was created right next to Ellie was none other than Ellie herself. The ‘black slime’ that she just used was none other than the Cloning Doppelganger.

This Cloning Doppelganger was something that she had secretly trained in Eivelis Empire. Now, this Cloning Doppelganger would take Ellie’s place and protect her throne for her.

Meanwhile, Ellie wore shabby leather armor and a black mask that went below her eyes, together with a pretty good sword on her waist. After covering most of her features, she climbed on top of a horse.

‘I’m going to cheer for you, Minhyuk.’

“Hiyaa!”

A soldier whose proportions were significantly smaller than the robust and sturdy Eivelis Empire soldiers dashed through the capital of the empire and headed straight towards the place where the war was about to unfold. Although the soldier looked shabby and ragged, the power that this one person has could rival that of a huge army by herself.

Ruik felt his entire body shrink from both fear and tension as the unknown man stood in front of him and spoke to him. *‘Should I search through your pockets and get one gold each from you?’* His words sounded strangely similar to that. Also, Ruik was acting completely like someone weak that was being bullied and extorted for money. After suffering from the pressure that the man put him on, Ruik finally came to his senses.

‘How dare you...’

Ruik was a Sword of the Gods and was someone blessed by the God of Swordsmanship. He was someone that could be considered as their object of fear if he had stayed in the Human Realm from the very beginning. But a lowly livestock farmer dared to extort something from him? He could never stand such a huge disgrace.

The bodies of his allies that were killed by the livestock farmer in front of him were piled up like a mountain. However, this was something that Ruik could also do! Everything was so ridiculous.

How could he feel intimidated by the sword of the man in front of him? So, he fiercely stabbed his sword towards the man in front of him.

Claaaaaaang—

Brod looked at Ruik in slight admiration after feeling the strength that he had packed in his sword attack.

‘So, you’re strong.’

It was hard to find a single flaw to dig into from his attack. Then, Ruik stepped forward and swung his sword again and again.

Clang, clang, clang!

Brod looked at his sword strikes in interest as he deflected the attacks without taking a step back. That was right. Interest. He was interested. However, that was it. It was just interest, nothing more, nothing less. But the look in Brod’s eyes suddenly changed after seeing Ruik’s next attack.

Shwaaaaaa—

Dozens of black sword light seeped out of Ruik’s sword and flew towards Brod.

Thump, thump, thump, thump—

Brod raised his sword and blocked all of the sword lights which made him finally take a step back from his position. Seeing this, Ruik could not help but be terrified.

‘He’s not an ordinary livestock farmer. This man’s swordsmanship... is not any weaker than mine...’

No. The truth was Ruik was denying it. He was denying the fact that the swordsmanship and level of the man in front of him was leagues beyond him. The ‘Deviant Sword Light’, the skill that he had just cast, was the skill created by the God of Swordsmanship that no one could master. Although no one could master it, Ruik was able to learn it and that was also the reason why he was chosen by the Gods. But even after he used that skill, the only thing that he made the man do was take one step back.

‘Who the hell is that lord named Minhyuk for him to have this man as a subordinate?!’

It was completely unbelievable. He also could not understand why a person like him would work under a lord and become a livestock farmer. However, there was one thing that Ruik was certain about. He had to live and go back.

Puhaaaaaaa—

A huge explosion swept the area the moment Ruik’s sword hit the ground.

“Ha!”

Only then did Brod pull back and fly forward after regaining his balance once again. And Ruik’s sword that flew fiercely towards him was very flashy and flamboyant. After all, he was someone that the God of Swordsmanship had chosen. Afterimages appeared as his swords flew swiftly and fiercely the moment he swung his arm!

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang—

The dozens of afterimages that collided with Brod's sword exploded as if there were bombs attached to them!

“Ho?”

“Did you just ‘Ho’ at me?! Let’s see how long you can keep that up!!!”

With each powerful explosion, Brod's balance would tilt and make him stumble. Ruik would then use that opportunity to press harder.

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

Explosions engulfed Brod's body one after the other.

‘I can kill you!’

Ruik was the only one that could drive this man to his death.

‘It’s a bit tricky since this man uses his left hand to wield his sword, but I am not an idiot who can’t do something to compensate for that small bit of trickery.’

The trajectory of the sword and the way the swordsmanship was executed would change depending on which hand the sword user was using. It was rare for someone left-handed to use their left hand when using the sword, but it was not so difficult to handle for someone like Ruik. And finally...

Bang—

...Ruik, who landed on the ground, immediately moved back as a powerful force wrapped around his sword. Then, he fired a crescent sword light towards the dust that flew up from the explosion earlier.

Slaaaaaash—

This crescent sword light was different from ordinary sword lights. The further it went, the wider it became. It could even reach as much as fifteen meters in length. The ground shook from the force loaded in the crescent sword light. However, when Brod appeared from the cloud of dust that finally settled down his expression looked exactly like his expression when he said ‘Ho—’ earlier.

‘This Ho bastard...!’

He would prove the bastard wrong. His ‘Sword of God’ was a one-shot kill skill that could increase his attack by an additional 1,800%. And so far, only two people have blocked this skill. But then, at that moment, the man grabbed his sword with his right hand.

“...?”

Ruik could not understand what was happening for a moment. Why would a left-handed person using his left hand earlier grab his sword with his right hand when defending against an attack? The sword's efficiency would vary depending on what hand the sword user was using to grab his sword. Then, the man swung his sword towards the crescent sword light rushing towards him.

Baaaaaaaang—

A powerful wave of force stretched out from where the man was standing and dug up the surroundings. Even the ground cracked and the trees were pulled. And finally...

Riiiiiiip—

...it made contact with Ruik's Sword of God. However, despite its fierce momentum, the Sword of God fell down gently as if it was paper ripped into two.

"Hoo."

Ruik lost his mind after hearing Brod breathe out.

"You, you're right-handed?"

Brod remained silent.

'So Ruik, the one the God of Swordsmanship chose to be his successor, is just around this much?'

Brod was someone that had visited the Land of the Gods and had gone through a lot of things there. That was right. Brod had never attacked Ruik. And this fact brought great shock to Ruik, along with the fact that Brod was right-handed to begin with. And then...

"If it's about this much, then it's worth a try."

Ruik trembled after seeing the cold and frosty expression on Brod's face. Then, he watched as Brod pulled out several large spears from his back. The first spear pierced through Ruik's heart.

Stab—

The speed of the spear was so fast that Ruik could not even dodge or stop it. Then, the next one pierced through his neck.

Stab—

Then, another spear pierced through the pit of his stomach.

Staaaaaab—

There were a total of eight spears that pierced through Ruik's vital points. The truth was, Ruik had heard of these spears before.

"Urk, urk... Don't tell me... you're... the... Absolute Supreme God's..."

Ruik had collapsed as he tried to finish his words. But then, Brod looked coldly at him and said, "Tell these to those Gods."

Ruik was already on the verge of death, he could not even make a single sound but Brod's gaze made his body twitch.

"I will cut them down soon."

Chapter 438: The Ones that Gathered

Vwoooooooooooooong—

The trumpet rang loudly, shaking the entire Valhalla Territory and its vicinity.

Valhalla Territory, under the leadership of Let's Eat Sect, had transformed into something entirely new and became Valhalla Fortress. On top of the high walls of Valhalla Fortress stood the members of Let's Eat Sect, together with countless territory soldiers, as well as NPCs. They were all geared up and ready for battle.

'Minhyuk, you're really a genius,' Genie thought, a bitter smile on her face as she admired Minhyuk and his foresight.

The first one to suggest turning Valhalla into a fortress city was Minhyuk. He told them, *'I don't know which kingdom it will be, but I'm sure that plenty of people will want to devour us since we're trying to build a kingdom.'*

'Wouldn't the other kingdoms be kept in check by the Eivelis Empire?' Genie, as the vice guild master, expressed her doubts about Minhyuk's conjectures. However, the main reason why the other kingdom wanted to attack Let's Eat Sect was because they wanted to take their resources, their troops, and their abundant and rich crop for themselves. As for the other kingdoms...

'They're not going to participate. They will divide up the Let's Eat Sect and the exhausted kingdom that declared the war for themselves without using too much effort.'

Up until that point, Genie still doubted Minhyuk. She really could not agree wholeheartedly, since building a fortress required a huge amount of resources and manpower. However, Let's Eat Sect still gave their all in remaking Valhalla.

The ones that participated in turning Valhalla Territory into Valhalla Fortress were Olger, Golden Hammer Dwarf Lant's descendant, the very same person that Minhyuk had gained after successfully completing the Atlas Territory. There was also Roadol, the president of Ilhwa Construction. Roadol personally created the fortress' blueprint. Olger was very shocked when he first saw the blueprint that Roadol had presented.

'I... I have never seen a better blueprint than this in my entire life!'

A dwarf was as talented in construction as they were in blacksmithing. Shockingly, Dwarf Olger efficiently created and finished the sturdy and solid Valhalla Fortress, together with Roadol and the members of the Let's Eat Sect. Although it only appeared as a simple circle, the power hidden within the Fortress City of Valhalla was immense.

[You have created a Level 9 Building for the very first time.]

[As a reward, the Fortress City of Valhalla's buildings' defense will increase by 2,000 and the siege weapons' attack will increase by 2,000.]

This was an achievement that all of them got, but they were very shocked at Roadol who had led them. Roadol, or Taesik, had started from the bottom and worked his way up the ladder until he became the president of Ilhwa Construction, the top construction company in Korea. He had dreamt of creating a 'Colossal Fortress' and had always imagined its structure tens of thousands of times in his head.

And right now, he had finally achieved this dream.

Genie stared at the incoming cloud of dust as the trumpet rang loudly in the background. There were around 25,000 troops advancing towards Valhalla. They originally intended to launch a surprise attack but after hearing that the troops that attacked Atlas had been defeated, they knew that Valhalla Territory was already aware of their existence and had already prepared for war.

Then, Khan asked, "...What about Minhyuk?"

"He's still logged out. I sent him whispers and even tried calling him several times, but I couldn't reach him."

Genie bit her lips. She could not reach Minhyuk, the one that prepared for this war the most. In fact, he even told them, *'Don't worry. I gave it my all and prepared as much as I could. It's my gift to you but it can also be a weapon and tool that will help you in this war.'* Minhyuk spoke proudly of his achievements. He did not go lazy and prepared for days and nights on end to prepare this something for them.

When he went off the radar, Genie could not help but wonder as she looked at the tense and nervous faces of the troops lined up inside the Fortress City of Valhalla. She thought, *'They must be scared.'*

It might be a game for the players, but for these people, it was their reality, something that would determine their life and death. On top of that, there were around 25,000 enemy troops rushing towards them right now. From what she heard, there were another 165,000 troops that had gathered today and were slowly making their way towards this place. It was clear that they wanted to head straight for Atlas after they trampled on Valhalla. Their total would reach around 200,000. But Valhalla?

'We only have 6,000 troops.'

Could they even stop them? It would be hard but it had to be done. Genie, who was looking around the troops, suddenly stopped. Standing among the troops was a soldier with a smaller stature. At one glance, she could tell that the soldier was a woman. She was wearing a helmet and a mask that went below her eyes, shabby armor, and a fine-quality sword.

"Are you volunteering?"

Valhalla was also accepting volunteer soldiers.

The woman spoke firmly, "Yes. I want to protect Minhyuk! Long live Minhyuk!"

Genie smiled bitterly. She once again felt Minhyuk's greatness. He could even make the people of this world volunteer for him. Even women started to volunteer for him!

The woman hesitated for a moment as Genie just stared at her. But she continued, "The lord is very handsome! Long live the lord!!!"

"Ah?"

That was when Genie realized that the woman in front of her was Minhyuk's hardcore fan! Genie smiled lightly as she moved back to where she was.

The hardcore fan's identity was none other than Sword Emperor Ellie.

‘I will hide my identity from you as long as I can hide it.’

She used those rough and crude words to cover herself up and prevent anyone from recognizing her. If someone from the other kingdoms recognized her and knew that she had joined the war, she would incur their resentment and ire. So at this place, Ellie would act as Minhyuk’s extreme hardcore fan.

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Everyone in Minhyuk’s home was bustling around when Minhyuk fainted while exercising after playing games. According to his personal doctor, Lee Jinhwan, it was because he was ‘overworked’.

“We’re not sure when he’ll wake up. It’s because his body is extremely tired. I’m sure Chairman-nim is aware of the fact that Minhyuk has been pushing himself too hard for the past month to prepare for the big things that would happen in *Athenae*.”

Kang Minhoo could only sigh after hearing Lee Jinhwan’s words. Minhyuk had fallen into a deep sleep and they were not sure when he would wake up.

Minhyuk’s usual daily routine would consist of playing *Athenae* for twelve hours and exercising in reality for around four to five hours. But these days, his routine has become stricter and harsher. He even personally stepped things up in preparation for what was to come.

Meanwhile, on the TV placed in the corner of the room.

[This is Ronnie, ATV Broadcasting Station’s reporter. Right now, the Barras Kingdom and the allied guilds have joined forces and waged war against Valhalla Territory. We can expect a major war soon.]

[Many of the experts said that they can only see little to no chance of winning for Valhalla.]

[This is a war between 6,000 troops and 200,000 troops. There’s no denying the fact that Player Minhyuk has reached the top, not only in our country, but also in the world. However, no matter how strong he is, the difference in their forces is still big.]

That was right. The difference in the size of their troops was extremely big. Six thousand men was not enough to stop 200,000 strong troops.

‘What have you been preparing all this time, son?’ Minhoo thought as he smiled softly at his sleeping son. The truth was, as a father, he did not want his son to participate in this war and just take a good long rest even if he woke up.

‘But I know that this is not what you want.’

But more than that, Minhoo wanted to cheer for his son, Minhyuk.

“You have to wake up quickly to protect your friends and your territory,” Kang Minhoo said bitterly.

Meanwhile, on the TV...

[With the sound of the trumpet, the kingdom troops that waged war against Valhalla have started to advance!!!]

[The ground is shaking with the march of the 25,000 strong troops!]

...the enemies finally began to advance. Today was the day where they would determine whether the Let's Eat Sect would become a kingdom or would just be devoured.

The 25,000 troops on standby in the vicinity of Valhalla Territory began their attack. The Shield Unit, consisting of thousands of troops, took the vanguard and advanced forward, while the archers and the mages hid behind them and constantly sent attacks. There were also melee classes that were hiding in between their layers with their bodies curled up as much as possible.

Among them, someone was watching the battlefield very carefully. He was Amoure, the man hailed as the number one Pinnacle Strong Man. He stood at the peak of the strongest men in the continent as an assassin and a sage. In fact, not many knew of Amoure's existence. This was because he was great at being covert. He could even hide in the emperor's residence and assassinate the emperor without anyone knowing.

'However, I will not be able to assassinate Sword Emperor Ellie.'

Amoure smiled weirdly. The only person that Amoure would not assassinate was Sword Emperor Ellie. He was sure that he would not even be able to pull off an assassination because of how powerful she was.

'However, it would not be that difficult to assassinate Valhalla's commanders over there.'

The ones that he was looking at were none other than Vice Guild Master Genie, the key figures of Valhalla, as well as Conir, the boy with a sword. Amoure was a master of assassination and stealth. Even Da Zhuang, the best assassin that had learned a pinnacle skill, would be no match against him in terms of stealth. Amoure quickly cast his skill.

'Covert Shadow.'

This skill allowed him to move a thousand meters in one go and even allow him to use someone's shadow to change his position. And it was not just Amoure who joined from the Pinnacle Strong Men. Many others had joined because of the significant amount of silver, gold, and treasures that the kingdom had promised them. They participated as mercenaries because the promised reward was large enough for them to buy several territories for their own.

Amoure had already discussed it with the kingdom troops' commander. The moment the 20,000 strong troops moved, he would move through the shadows and go over Valhalla Fortress' walls and assassinate the key figures of the Let's Eat Sect.

'In the first place, an army without a commander would be useless.'

The troops would be thrown into a whirlwind of confusion soon enough. In fact, there were countless people that were stopping the enemies from approaching Valhalla Fortress' walls.

"Child's Tempest!"

Ramyeon Boy Conir cast his skill from atop the walls of the fortress and let out a storm that tore the incoming shield units into pieces.

“Punks! Where do you think you are?! Ghost’s Dance!”

When the old man with long hair stabbed forward with his spear, the shield in the middle broke apart, effectively making their ranks collapse.

‘Rumor has it that Ghost Spear Ben has become much stronger than before. It seems like it’s true.’

Of course, Amoure had connections with Ghost Spear Ben. After all, he was once the eighth among the Pinnacle Strong Men. Right now, Ghost Spear Ben’s current skills were strong enough that it could allow him to compete against the second Pinnacle Strong Man. Amoure looked at them and decided on his first target.

‘I’ll start with that woman. Their commander.’

Once their commander collapsed, the army would follow. Amoure would start with her and reduce the number of their key figures one after another. He hid behind one of the shields, and moved towards the Valhalla commander’s shadow. When he appeared again, he was already right behind Genie.

“Mages! Use your fire magic to stop the advancing shield unit!”

She was still commanding her troops, unaware of the fact that Amoure was already emerging from her shadow. Amoure intended to slit Genie’s throat in one go and take advantage of the noise and chaos of the battlefield to move to other shadows. But just as he stopped to pull out his dagger...

Pat—

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaa! For Lord Minhyuuuuuuk!!! Lord Minhyuk, I love you!!! Please take me!!!”

“Huh?”

Genie, feeling a pat on her back, turned to look at the direction of the shout of an unknown woman. That was when she saw Minhyuk’s extreme hardcore fan.

“...?”

At first, she could not understand what was happening, but that was when she found Amoure emerging from her shadows.

“...!”

Both Amoure and Genie were in shock as they made eye contact. Meanwhile, Amoure felt goosebumps rise from his body.

‘It, it was deliberate...! She did it to tell this woman about my existence...!’

Chapter 439: The Ones that Gathered

Amoure was the first among the Pinnacle Strong Men and was someone that was beyond Level 670. As an assassin, he made full use of his stealth and always aimed for a powerful one shot kill. Truth was, not many people could sense Amoure and his signs.

However, that woman who screamed ‘Lord, I love you!’ deliberately patted Genie to look back at Amoure and made sure that she discovered his existence.

“Khan! Conir!!! Ben!” Genie hurriedly called for the people closest to her the moment she saw the man hiding in her shadows. It was clear to her that he was an enemy that she could not deal with on her own.

“Amoure...?!” Ghost Spear Ben shouted, as his expression turned into one of shock and dismay when he recognized Amoure. This was because Amoure was extremely strong and stealthy.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Amoure, who disappeared into the shadows again, appeared right behind Ben.

Claaaaaaang—

Ben’s spear moved swiftly, targeting Amoure’s abdomen, neck, and head. However, it was not easy for Ben to land an attack on Amoure. Instead of landing an attack, it was Amoure who used his ridiculous dagger technique.

“Bloody Death.”

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The dagger in Amoure’s hand flew towards Ben’s throat at breakneck speed.

“Gra... Grandpa Ben!!!”

“Conir!!! Conir help Grandpa Ben!!!”

Conir and Genie ran towards Ben but they were already a step too late. Even if they ran as fast as they could, Ben’s neck would still be pierced by the dagger. Unlike the event in the Continent Cloud, the NPCs did not have the special privilege of living again after being killed here. In other words, if Ghost Spear Ben got killed here, then he would face absolute death.

“No!!!” Genie shouted with an ugly expression on her face. Many would be sad and in despair if Ben died. Especially Minhyuk. He treated Ghost Spear Ben tenderly and carefully as if he was his own paternal grandfather. But just when despair flashed in their eyes...

“Ooooooooooooooh?! Is that Minhyuk?!!! My lord, please take me!!!”

Minhyuk’s Extreme Hardcore Fan passed by Ghost Spear Ben. As she passed by, she pulled Ben slightly. The momentum of the slight pull forced Ben’s body slightly away, causing the dagger that was aiming for his neck to miss by just a hair’s breadth.

“Eh? I got the wrong one? Hiiing...” Extreme Hardcore Fan scratched her helmet after passing by Ghost Spear Ben.

Amoure frowned as he watched her scratch her helmet in a silly manner. He thought, ‘*Was it just a coincidence...?*’

Amoure doubted himself for a moment. This was because he could not feel any force from her and if he could not detect any sign of force from her body, it would either be just one of the two cases. Either the woman in front of him was weak, or her power far exceeded his own.

However, no matter how hard he looked at her, the second case seemed to be completely impossible.

In that gap, Ghost Spear Ben thrust his spear forward once again. However, Amoure could see many steps ahead of them. It would only take three seconds for Ben to close the gap between them. It was just three seconds, but Amoure already envisioned himself twisting his body away and evading Ghost Spear Ben’s spear. Then, he would proceed to stab Conir, who was approaching him from behind, on the throat with his dagger. He would then use the boy’s body as a springboard to deal with Genie, the commander of Valhalla who was running to save them, before jumping in the shadows to hide.

‘What a perfect scenario.’

Amoure’s lips twisted into a gruesome smirk as he immediately sprung into action. He twisted his body slightly and avoided Ghost Spear Ben’s spear. Then, he turned around while stretching his arm to stab Conir, who was trying to cast his skill. No. He was about to stretch his arm out.

“Kyaaaaaaaaa! I’m sure this time it’s for real!!! Minhyuk! Look at me! My lord! Take me!!! Please hold me, my lord!!!”

Thud—

It was just a split second. But in that moment, Extreme Hardcore Fan hit Amoure’s turning body. To others, it might look like a light poke but...

Poke, poke, poke, poke—

...her fingers accurately hit Amoure's acupuncture points. Then, at that moment...

[You have received a blow from a veteran.]

[All of your acupuncture points have been blocked. You will be in a stunned state for three seconds.]

‘Wha... what...?!’

Amoure’s expression turned ugly. Well, to be exact, his confusion and shock could only be seen through his widening eyes. But the woman that only passed by him in that split second looked far away again while scratching her helmet.

“It’s not him either? Hiiing...”

Amoure’s eyes widened in shock.

*‘That... that b*tch...’*

She did it on purpose. The blows that he received just now were a testament to that fact. And there was no doubt about her identity. But then, Conir finally cast his skill and...

“Wailing Child!”

...triggered a ridiculously fast sword dance! The sword lights danced around and wrapped around Amoure’s body without stopping! Ghost Spear Ben took advantage of this attack to approach Amoure and stab him on the neck with all his might.

Staaaaaab—

Amoure, who was slowly collapsing, saw Minhyuk’s Extreme Hardcore Fan smiling quietly before his eyes slowly closed. Genie, on the other hand, approached the mysterious woman with a subtle smile on her face. The woman was making herself busy turning her head left and right as she tried to look for Minhyuk.

“Thank you for your help.”

“I’m willing to give my life for Minhyuk. I have no other wish but to hold Minhyuk’s hands!!!”

Minhyuk’s Extreme Hardcore Fan, in other words Ellie, was playing dumb.

However, Genie had already noticed that she was Sword Emperor Ellie. The same was true for Ben and Conir. Still, they all pretended that they did not know.

“Where’s Minhyuk?”

Genie could only smile wryly when she heard those words.

“About that... We don’t know either.”

“Ah... this... But I thought this was my chance to see Minhyuk up close!!!”

Ellie, with a disappointed expression on her face, could not help but wonder where Minhyuk was.

Thousands of soldiers that formed the shield unit rushed forward, together with the Barras Kingdom troops, and pushed towards the fortress’ entrance!

Thwaaaaaaaack!

Genie’s whip cracked and landed on hundreds of shields, splitting them in half. The enemies could not help but look at her in awe and admiration after seeing her shocking display of power. This was because she swept away dozens of shields in a single attack. But it did not end there. Conir jumped down from the walls.

“Conir will make everyone eat ramyeon in our territory!”

The moment he landed, Conir jumped up like a spring and cut down the enemies that blocked his path. Just when Conir was being surrounded by the enemies...

Flaaaaaash—

...Golden Mage Ali suddenly appeared beside Conir using Blink before using Mass Teleport to take Conir back with him to the walls.

“Firewall! Firewall! Firewall!”

Puhaaaaaa!

Puhaaaaaa!

A wall of fire about seven meters in height sprang to life and devoured the flocking enemy troops. The enemies that disappeared from the walls of fire numbered at around a hundred and fifty.

“Red Fire’s Hell Carriage!”

“Giant’s Battering!”

Khan, Ace, and Crow stood in front of the gates and decimated their enemies with their AOE attack skills.

[Let’s Eat Sect’s pride and dignity is beyond what we can imagine.]

[The 20,000 strong troops are having a hard time breaking through the 6,000 strong troops.]

[Maybe it’s because they are top rankers?]

Contrary to what the commentators were saying, it was not only the rankers that were fighting.

“Archers, fire!”

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

Hundreds of arrows poured down from the walls at Centurion Park’s orders. The arrows that they sent down broke the armor of the enemy and shot through their vital points. With every ‘fwoosh’, an enemy would fall down.

In the first place, the soldiers that Let’s Eat Sect and Minhyuk had trained were at a higher level than the soldiers of Barras Kingdom. Because of this, the invading guild alliance had no choice but to place countless rankers and knights in the vanguard.

[The rankers and knights are hiding behind the shields as they try to advance forward.]

[It’s because they can’t advance with ordinary soldiers so they’re trying to break through the defenses in one go!]

It was just like what the commentators said. If they sent ordinary troops forward then they would just incur unnecessary losses. That was why the rankers and knights had to step forward. And the ones that were leading them were the Pinnacle Strong Men.

‘Where the hell did Amoure go?’

‘Did something go wrong? That’s definitely not the case, right?’

The thought that Amoure had died did not even cross their minds. This was because they knew that even if they grouped together, they would find it difficult to win against Amoure.

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

Under the rain of magic bombs and arrows, the shields that led the rankers and the knights, around a thousand in numbers, finally reached the gates of the fortress. The rankers and knights stepped forward and defended against the enemies attacks with practiced response.

‘If we can break through the gates then...’

It was no different from saying that the war had ended. So, the knights and the rankers increased their momentum and attacked the gates fiercely.

‘We only need ten minutes to pierce through their gates... huh?’

One of the Pinnacle Strong Men, Loki the Sword Supreme, saw an incredible sight. The rankers and the knights were attacking the gates just like they were ordered. However, the problem was...

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

“Euaaaaaaack!”

“Keheooooook!”

...it was not the gates that were falling but the knights and the rankers. They even screamed as they fell down one after another. It was not long after that Loki realized the reason why.

‘My goodness... They placed a reflection ability on the gates itself?!’

In order for the gates to have the ability to reflect attacks, the strongest mage and the best architect had to work together. But no matter how hard Loki tried to make sense of it, he could not understand it at all.

The knights and soldiers that were attacking the gates shifted their attention and targeted the walls. They used their powerful attack skills, knights’ auras, and mages’ magic to attack the walls. However...

‘There, there’s not even a crack...?!’

It was completely shocking. What in the world did Minhyuk do to have such strong soldiers and a sturdy fortress?!

‘Is he really talented enough to become king?’ Loki thought as he gnashed his teeth.

‘That’s why he has to disappear. No. We have to take it and make it ours.’

The Pinnacle Strong Men intended to devour everything, including Let’s Eat Sect, for themselves. At that moment, a pigeon landed in front of Loki and brought a smile to his face. Almost 170,000 troops from Barras Kingdom were now preparing to march here. There were even around 10,000 powerful soldiers, along with 20,000 cavalry sent here in advance too.

‘Everything will end now,’ Loki thought, already picturing their victory.

“Hiyaa! Hiyaa!”

Twenty thousand cavalry, followed by ten thousand Barras Kingdom knights, soldiers, and top rankers, were advancing as fast as they could. Before anyone knew it, they were already approaching Valhalla Territory.

Meanwhile, Team Leader Park Minggyu, who was monitoring the situation in the Special Players Management Team...

‘What in the world is Player Minhyuk doing...? Where the hell is he?’

He was wondering where Minhyuk was. The 30,000 cavalry and rankers were getting closer and closer, soon joining the 20,000 troops that advanced ahead of time. If these two troops combined together, they would reach a total of 50,000. The cloud of dust that these incoming troops had created would bring fear to Valhalla Territory.

‘Is this the end...?’

Minggyu thought that Minhyuk could do it. That he could be the very first person to climb and sit on a throne in Athenae. However, there were just too many enemies.

Unfortunately, the Barras Kingdom cavalry joined with the rest of the kingdom's troops without a hitch. There were too many of them. It was to the point that they almost looked like a sea of black. This 20,000 strong cavalry would bring a great boost to their forces.

But then, at that moment...

“Team, Team Leader...! There are unidentified troops moving towards Valhalla!”

“...What?”

Park Minggyu’s face was colored with shock.

‘Unidentified troops? Are they from Barras Kingdom? Or perhaps they are volunteers from other kingdoms?’

Up until that point, Park Minggyu had no idea if they were Let’s Eat Sect’s enemy or ally.

“Open the map and check the area.”

“Yes, Team Leader.”

Lee Minhwa quickly tapped on her keyboard as Park Minggyu tried to make sense of what was happening. Finally, Lee Minhwa was able to find the troops. She quickly tapped on the location and enlarged it on her monitor. The figures of the troops finally came into view.

Dash, dash, dash, dash, dash—

They were around seventy kilometers away from Valhalla. The troops were 5,000 elves riding on white warhorses and right in front of them were 5,000 strong Dragon King Legion riding on top of giant four-legged crabs. And that was not the end of it. There were several people running through the thickets a little over ten kilometers away from them. They were wearing asura masks on their faces with spears on their hands. Team Leader Park Minggyu watched the scene in stunned silence. This was a miracle that Minhyuk had created. And this miracle was heading towards Valhalla.

At the same time, Minhyuk, who was fast asleep in his room...

Twitch—

...slowly started to move his fingers.

Chapter 440: The Ones that Gathered

The 20,000 cavalry, together with the top rankers and the kingdom's strongest knights that the Barras Kingdom had sent, were the true elites of the kingdom! Barras Kingdom's cavalry was even rumored to be the strongest in the continent, even more superior than Eivelis Empire's. These troops joined the 20,000 troops that went ahead earlier, bringing the total of the Barras Kingdom troops surrounding Valhalla to 50,000.

[That's quite the number. Valhalla facing these 50,000 troops is like a child fighting against an adult.]

[Except for the war that Joy Co. Ltd. has set up, this is the first time that I have seen a large-scale war like this. I have no words for the overflowing majesty of these 50,000 strong troops.]

50,000 troops! This staggering number was enough to make a sea of black! On the other hand, Valhalla Fortress' surviving troops numbered less than a tenth of their enemy troops. Plenty of people inside the fortress, including Genie, felt their breath stagnate at the sight. The huge army in front of them was enough to make their skin crawl. However, they could not retreat.

Centurion Park remembered how Minhyuk gave him the opportunity to see his mother, the person that he wanted to see for the longest time. The commander of the mage corps, Golden Mage Ali, also remembered how Minhyuk approached him with sincerity and befriended a loner like him.

Lucia, the assassin of the moon, grabbed her dagger tightly with her allies standing behind her firmly. She joined Let's Eat Sect with these people, her guild members, right after the hunt for Vormon. She remembered how Minhyuk instilled new values in her, making her reign in her pride and arrogance. She also wanted to protect him too.

There was also Alicia and the mages of Artheon that joined Let's Eat Sect. Genie, who liked and cared about Minhyuk more than anyone else. Ghost Spear Ben, who cared for Minhyuk like he was his own son. Aruvel, who was reborn as a best selling author. Conir, who trusted and followed Minhyuk after he saved him from being a chimera. Every single one of the soldiers that stood here.

Genie addressed all of these people, "We will not let this place be taken away."

The fear that stemmed from facing the 50,000 troops in front of them only appeared for a brief moment. It was, however, soon replaced by the thrill of gaining unrivaled fame once they gained victory over these enemies. They could not help but look forward to it.

"Protect Valhalla!!!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

A loud roar rang from the depths of Valhalla Fortress. Their roar caused the 50,000 troops to be at loss.

"This..."

Loki might be their enemy, but he could not help but be impressed. Even the remaining Pinnacle Strong Men were the same.

“Their king is not present, but they’re still willing to protect him?”

“I acknowledge their spirit.”

“However, that spirit will soon be dragged through the dumps.”

In front of these 50,000 strong troops stood the Pinnacle Strong Men. And Loki was the one that would lead these troops. The moment Loki pointed forward...

Dash, dash, dash, dash—

Ten thousand cavalry immediately rushed forward, which was immediately followed by the Barras Kingdom troops in various formations. Their mage troops repelled the enemy’s magic, while the archers shot their arrows at the soldiers standing on the fortress’ walls. There were also the close combat troops that stuck close to the walls.

Root pulled the strings of his bow tightly as he aimed at the approaching cavalry.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Thwack—

Root’s arrow immediately spread out and became forty arrows the moment he let go. These forty arrows cut through the air and shot their enemies’ vital points. The cavalry unit immediately raised their single-handed shield to protect themselves from the arrows.

Alas, Root was not aiming for them.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

His forty arrows accurately struck the necks of the horses that carried these soldiers.

“Hihihihihihing!”

“Hihihihihihihihihihing!”

The horses shrieked painfully as they fell down to the ground after the arrows struck their necks. The knights hurriedly tried to get up but they saw the arrows turn red.

“Don’t tell me...?!”

At that moment...

Baaaaaaaaaaaang!

Baaaaang!

Baaaaaaaaang!

...the arrows exploded and devoured the nearby knights.

[The arrows that Player Root released suddenly exploded after getting stuck in the horses’ necks. What an amazing sight.]

[Those forty afterimages of his arrow can explode like that? That’s extremely incredible.]

The explosion not only devoured the nearby knights, it also swept away the cavalry rushing from behind them. Just one attack damaged a hundred of the enemy troops, by either restricting their movements or causing them fatal injuries.

However, contrary to the people's admiration, Root felt that it was a pity. He thought, *'If only my arrows could have more destructive power...'*

After all, what he used earlier was a 'skill'. If Root's bow and arrow had more destructive power, then he would have broken the enemies' armors and pierced through their vital points without using any skill. They were fighting a war, which meant that they had to minimize their MP consumption as much as possible.

'I'm still not good enough,' Root thought, both admitting and regretting the fact that he was still lacking. However, he continued to pull his bow and stop the incoming enemies. There were in fact more people that thought that way.

"Ghost's Dance!"

Shwaa, shwaa, shwaa, shwaa, shwaa, shwaa!

A powerful force extended from Ghost Spear Ben's spear, which pierced through the top ranking knights that rode on the warhorses, effectively bringing them down.

'If my spear has more destructive power then I could pierce through these knights and even kill the soldiers marching behind them.'

They were now at war. The more powerful they become, the more they realized their shortcomings and limits.

Crow, Let's Eat Sect's main dealer, fired a 'spear light' towards one of the Pinnacle Strong Men, Loki. However, Crow's spear light attack failed to reach Loki after dozens of knights stepped forward to destroy his attack and protect their commander. Crow looked down at his hands and thought, *'If only my penetrative force and attack were much higher...'*

Then, his attacks would have probably reached Loki. This was the reason why Let's Eat Sect continued to become stronger. Even though they were already recognized as top players and rankers, they were willing to acknowledge their limits and shortcomings, and strive to move forward and better themselves.

Finally...

[The Barras Kingdom's 20,000 strong troops have successfully advanced forward and reached the gates.]

[The 30,000 strong troops in the rear are following the orders of the Pinnacle Strong Men.]

[They're trying to make it into a battle of attrition. As you can see, there are a lot of siege weapons aiming to destroy the walls of the fortress.]

An overwhelmingly large 50,000 strong troops surrounded Valhalla Fortress. Meanwhile, Commander Loki looked at the foreigners that surrounded him. He stood among them, as they looked forward to the walls falling down.

‘The walls will fall down soon enough.’

Loki did not know who was the architect behind Valhalla Fortress. However, there was one thing that he was sure of, that person was amazing. Even now, their mages were doing their best to use their most powerful magic attacks to deal damage to the walls. However, despite that, they could only deal small scratches on the walls.

‘As long as we continue with our attacks, we will be able to make those walls collapse.’

They also pulled out their siege weapons to further aggravate the situation, in the hopes of advancing further into Valhalla Fortress. Their soldiers started hanging ladders over the fortress’ walls.

Thuuuuuuuud—

Thuuuuuuuuuuuud—

The catapults from behind kept on throwing huge boulders.

Baaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaang—

Shockingly enough, the boulders that the catapults launched would fall down unsuccessfully. The boulders could not break down the fortress. It was as if they had collided with a strong and tough iron wall. Only their allies were dying.

“They think they can last long, huh?”

This war might take a day, two days, four days, or even a month. In this long and tedious war, these walls would definitely not last that long. And there were even 50,000 strong troops sticking on these walls!

Among these troops, 10,000 of them were foreigners, and the one leading them was none other than Brad, ‘The Dungeon Butcher’ and one of Korea’s top ranking players. He had been working under wraps up until now, but his power was known to rival even Let’s Eat Sect’s strongest rankers. That was the reason why he was tasked to lead the foreigners during this war.

“Foreigner soldiers, climb the ladders!!!” Loki cried loudly.

Brad, who was nearby, could only smile bitterly as he thought, *‘Do you want to minimize the damage to the NPC troops by using the players as vanguard?’*

However, it did not really matter to Brad. He had already expected their strategy to be like this. It was only natural that they took better care of the NPCs than the foreigners.

The members of Let’s Eat Sect were moving busily on the walls as they destroyed the ladders that unfolded all over the place. While doing so, Genie recalled the conversation that she had with Minhyuk before.

‘This is a method that you can also use during the war.’

Although Minhyuk was not present, they had already talked about a lot of things before. Back then, Genie thought that Minhyuk was a genius. Genie stepped forward to enact one of the strategies that he had told her before, bringing a huge commotion to the people below.

“Are you trying to surrender?” Loki smiled in victory. In fact, everyone had the same idea as him. However, instead of surrendering, Genie just raised an unknown onion in the air.

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

‘Why did she suddenly lift an onion? Is that some kind of onion bomb?’

Just when everyone was wondering what it was about, Genie shook the onion in her hand as she looked around until she found Brad and shouted, “Brad! How about coming to our side and killing the troops around you?”

“...”

Brad remained silent at her words.

‘Has Genie gone crazy?’

When this thought flashed in his head, Genie threw the onion to Brad. Brad, who unconsciously caught the onion, looked at it in doubt. Loki looked at Brad with a smile and thought, *‘Is she a nutcase? You suddenly want them to go on your side?’*

Just like Loki, the players and the soldiers in the vicinity all thought the same thing as they looked at Brad, who gulped dryly as he looked up at Genie.

The truth was, Genie was making a bet. She said, “If you side with us now, then I will add two more of that. With every centurion that you kill, you will get onions, green onions, and garlic. One per kill. Each person can get as much as ten of each ingredient in total.”

“Bwahahahahahahaha! You’re crazy!” Loki burst into laughter.

‘Does she really think that they would betray their allies for an onion?’

They were aware of the bountiful rewards that they would get from the Barras Kingdom quest.

Brad smirked. Those that looked at him thought that he was smiling because he thought the same. Not long after, he looked up at Genie while grabbing his sword firmly. His skill ‘Death Wind’ was about to be cast. This was Brad’s strongest AOE attack skill, a skill that could cut down each and every enemy that they passed by. It also had a death energy that would deal an additional 1,000% attack to the enemies that it passed by.

Finally, a huge wind wrapped around Brad’s sword. However, although unbelievable, the direction that he was pointing his sword at was not at Genie, but towards the enemies that surrounded Valhalla.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A huge blade of wind cut down hundreds of his so-called allies. But it did not end there, a strong power of death devoured them and led them to their deaths. Then, Brad said, “I’ll even willingly suck up to you. Long live, long live Let’s Eat Sect! Long live!”

Brad, who was their enemy just a few seconds ago, had defected to Let’s Eat Sect’s side, and even went so far as to ‘suck up’ to them. This was because the onion that Genie gave to Brad was none other than the ‘Ingredient Heaven’'s onion, one that could permanently raise stats.