

Gourmet 441

Chapter 441: Extreme Hardcore Fan's Performance

Brad flew up like a butterfly and cut down the Barras Kingdom troops and their allied players, before flying straight towards one of the centurions. For someone to become a centurion, one had to be either a holder of a title at least at baronet-rank, or was one of the kingdom's knights.

Spurt—

After stabbing the neck of one of the centurions, Brad, just like a raging bull, went on a rampage and cut down the surrounding troops, including his previous allies.

“Wh, what the...?!”

“What the hell is that onion?!”

Loki could not help but rub his eyes in doubt. He wondered, ‘*You’d rather take that onion instead of the treasures that Barras Kingdom offered?*’

The nightmare did not end there, as Genie had talked about other ingredients like green onions and garlic. On top of that, she was not remotely satisfied with just tempting Brad, even calling out another ranker, “Arte.”

Arte was a magic swordsman, a class that players rarely choose when playing *Athenae* because of the difficulty of utilizing magic while wielding a sword. Most of the players that chose this class would exert lesser power when using magic and swordsmanship together, than when they used one or the other.

However, Arte was a genius with superb control and excellent gamer skills. He was able to master both magic and swordsmanship and use it at the same time. Despite being ranked at 301st for the local knight rankings and 601st for the local mage rankings, Arte could exert far more power than Brad.

Ever since the appearance of the onion, Arte had been looking at Brad incredulously. He was wondering if Brad had gone insane in that short period of time. How could he give up the rewards that they would receive for a single onion? After all, the rewards that they would receive from Barras Kingdom would increase the greater their contributions by hunting the Valhalla troops, breaking their walls, and so forth.

The worst part of this? Brad would be condemned and mocked for his actions.

‘*Maybe Brad’s a spy that Let’s Eat Sect planted, right??*’ Just as this thought flashed in Arte’s head, Genie threw an onion to him too.

‘*What the hell? You’re also giving me an onion as a reward? That’s ridiculous,*’ Arte thought as he grabbed the onion and checked its details.

“...???”

Arte, speechless beyond belief, looked between Genie and the onion alternately, as the abacus in his head started to clack at a furious speed. Each person could eat up to ten of this ingredient that could randomly increase the STM and STR from 1~3. If his luck was good, then he would be able to gain more than +15 in his stats in one go.

The higher the rankers' level became, the more they clung desperately to even a single point increase in their stats. That was why the rankers would willingly trade more than hundreds of millions of cash, just for a single elixir. However, despite the growing demand, the elixirs remained scarce in the market, which made it all the more precious.

To think that the onion in Arte's hand could raise his stats the moment he ate it? And permanently at that? At that moment, he could feel how great and amazing Minhyuk was.

'I know that he loves to eat, but I did not expect him to develop such an amazing ingredient,' Arte could not help but admire Minhyuk.

Just a few moments ago, Arte was cursing Genie and Brad. But now, the surrounding troops and players were looking at him incredulously when they saw his expression turn into that of admiration.

"Eyyyy~ Not Arte."

"That's right. He's the one that told us that we should be nice to each other."

They thought that it would definitely be impossible. But at that moment...

"Long live Let's Eat Sect! Long live!!!"

...Arte also declared his overflowing love and affection for Let's Eat Sect. And along with his declaration, his hands unfolded towards the horse that a centurion was riding on.

"Explosion."

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The skill created a huge explosion that engulfed a thirty meter radius area and devoured more than thirty troops at one go.

Genie continued to throw onions towards the rankers in the vicinity, one after the other. And every time they received the onions...

"Long live Let's Eat Sect! Long, long live!!!"

"Play, play Let's Eat Sect! Play, play Let's Eat Sect!"

"Praise be to Let's Eat Sect!"

...the rankers, around thirty of them standing near the gates, immediately change sides.

"They're out of their minds!"

“Crazy bastards!!!”

The Pinnacle Strong Men had no choice but to move urgently and deal with the rankers that suddenly changed sides. When the Pinnacle Strong Men launched their attacks, the rankers immediately gathered together to defend and block them. And when their HP reached 5%...

Flaaaaaaaaash—

...they would hurriedly use their return spells. As they disappeared in a flash of light, these thoughts flashed in their heads:

‘We need to hurry up and refill our tanks so we can hunt again!’

‘We can get onions with every successful hunt!’

The rankers that changed sides and held hands with Let’s Eat Sect had killed more than four thousand Barras Kingdom Troops. This could be attributed to the fact that they were in the middle of the kingdom troops. They also had support in the form of magic bombs, arrows, and boulders that the members of Let’s Eat Sect kept on throwing down from the walls.

However, even though they shaved off a huge chunk out of the troops, the majesty of the surviving 40,000 troops did not decrease.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang!

Baaaaaaaaaaaang!

Baaaaaaaaaaaang!

A shocking tremor would shake the walls of the fortress with every hit that the 40,000 strong troops landed.

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!”

“Kggggghhhhk!”

“Urkkkkk!”

Of course, screams still rang rife among the kingdom troops with every hit, thanks to the reflection ability that covered the entire fortress’ walls. The Barras Kingdom troops and their allied players all abhorred this ability. However, they could not deny the fact that they had been left in awe by the amazing architecture and ability that these walls had.

“The reflection ability will soon disappear!” Loki said.

The truth was just like Loki had declared. The fortress truly did not have an infinite amount of reflection ability and would eventually run out.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Just like that, the moment that they had been waiting for finally arrived. One of the soldiers that attacked the walls did not receive any more damage, proof that the fortress’ reflection ability was no longer in effect. As if lighting a beacon for victory, the 4,000 strong mage unit started to cast magic bombs before sending them to the fortress’ walls.

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

Valhalla Fortress shook tremendously with every hit of the magic spells. It did not matter how tough and sturdy the walls of their fortress were, as long as these 4,000 mages continued to bomb the walls, it would prove difficult for their walls to remain unscathed. Genie watched as the durability of their walls decreased at a rapid pace. She hurriedly ran out and shouted, “Everyone, retreat!” before pushing a red button. Then, at that moment...

Whiiiiiiiiiiiiir—

Clack!

Whiiiiiiiiiiiiir—

Clack!

Whiiiiiiiiiiiiir—

Clack!

The bricks, or what seemed to be bricks, of the walls suddenly started to move and change shapes. This fortress, one that could be considered as a magic fortress with its ability to reflect attacks, was the result of the collaboration of three people. They were Roadol, the president of Ilhwa Construction and a legend in the Korean construction industry; Olger, the descendant and genius disciple of Golden Hammer Dwarf Lant that had been acknowledged by his master as someone that had transcended him in abilities; and Ali, the world’s strongest mage and the heir to the Dragon’s Mana Heart.

But the truth was, the reflection ability was only one part of the fortress. The more shocking ability of these fortress’ walls was their ability to store and accumulate around 5,000 first to fourth tier magic.

Simply put, these walls, instead of using siege weapons, could launch magic attacks.

The transforming bricks finally opened up as they unleashed the first to fourth tier magical attacks that Ali had saved by the hundreds for days towards the tens of thousands of troops that had been gathered near the fortress. All hell broke loose as disaster exploded towards the troops.

Shwaaaaaaaa—

The first magic spell that burst out were huge flames. These flames, the Fireball, engulfed hundreds, perhaps more, of the enemy troops that loitered near the walls.

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

The next one were spears made out of lightning. These electric spears pierced through the enemies and burned them into ashes in an instant.

Bang!

Baaaaaang!

Baaaaaang!

Baaaaaang!!!

Then, huge explosions engulfed the enemy troops that continued to advance forward.

Shwaaaaaa—

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

It was then followed by Wind Cutter, which unleashed blades of wind that tore the enemies into pieces.

Shockingly enough, even the elite knights could not stop the magic attacks. This could be attributed to the fact that it was Golden Mage Ali's magic that was accumulated in the walls.

Golden Mage Ali, who was waiting for this opportune moment — the moment when all their enemies were swarming and were literally concentrated near the walls, the very same moment when AOE attack skills could exert their greatest powers — flew up to the skies with his Staff of Despair in hand and golden hair fluttering wildly, and unleashed despair upon the enemy troops.

Crack, crack, crack—

Crack, crack, crack—

Crack, crack, crack—

A space was torn open in the skies as seven gigantic meteors descended on the ground. The kingdom troops could only gape in horror as they watched the man-made 'disaster' cover the skies and cast a huge shadow upon them.

'This is Meteor...?' Loki thought, shock prevalent on his face.

No NPC mages could use Meteor as of the moment. However, Ali, who had continued to grow further, had reached the level where he could unleash Meteor without needing the support of Minhyuk's dishes like in the past.

What did this mean? It meant that Ali was far more powerful than all the mages in existence currently.

Booooooooooooooooooom—

The first thing that engulfed the troops was the blazing fire that surrounded the falling meteor. Then, the moment the meteor made contact with the ground, the surrounding enemies disintegrated into nothingness. One meteor razed the ground and killed around two thousand troops. It was like a nuclear bomb going off, its power destructive. When the rest fell down on the ground...

Booooooooooom—

Boooooooooooooooooom—

Boooooooooooooooooom—

...everything disappeared. The thousands of magic attacks that the fortress fired, together with Ali's Meteor, completely devoured the 20,000 troops, causing them to disappear with no resistance at all.

Loki's face turned ugly. He thought, *'Are you telling me that they really have the power to become a kingdom?!'*

He finally realized why King Grain was afraid. This was because they already had more power and force than an established kingdom.

[The morale of the Barras Kingdom Troops has dramatically decreased.]

[All stats decrease by 15%.]

Loki immediately looked around only to see plenty of their troops lose their will to fight as fear enveloped their beings. There were even a considerable number of soldiers that turned away from the fortress' walls and ran away.

Crack—

But Loki believed that they would eventually win this fight.

Puhaaaaaa—

He cut off the head of one of the escaping soldiers. And the same was true for the other Pinnacle Strong Men. They brought judgment to the deserters.

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

“Euaaaaaaack!”

“Why, why us too?!”

“Those that decide to flee will be dealt with in accordance with King Grain's orders!!!”

“Forward!!!”

They did not show any consideration or care for the survival of the kingdom's army. All that was running in their heads was to occupy Valhalla.

‘Terrifying...’

‘They, they only think of us as shields...’

‘Is this truly what our kingdom thinks of us...?!’

The fleeing kingdom soldiers grabbed their weapons tightly as they looked up at the cheering troops standing above the walls.

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Uwoaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

The commanding officers of the Valhalla Fortress were hugging and rejoicing with their soldiers.

‘They're completely different from us.’

‘This means that Lord Minhyuk is a very nice person!’

For a moment, the kingdom troops felt envy. The leaders of the Valhalla Fortress were different from the slayers among their midst that were blinded by greed and willingly cut off the necks of their allies. To their own commanders, they were just their meat shields that had no choice but to advance forward.

In the end, Valhalla Fortress exhausted all of the magic that they had accumulated. The kingdom troops could only do their best to strike and break their walls, even if they did not want to anymore.

[The fortress' walls' durability has decreased and is only at 3/10.]

[That's dangerous. Those walls might collapse anytime soon!]

Along with the commentators' voices, the shouts that brought despair to the fortress troops began to ring loudly one after the other.

“The mana potions are all gone...”

“Is there anyone who can still use a skill?!”

“Is there anyone who can use an AOE skill?!”

“Soldiers, where are the arrows?! Are we out of arrows?!”

What about their supply routes? There was no way that Valhalla could use them with how surrounded they were. The soldiers' arrows? Everything had been used up. Their weapons? Their swords and spears were broken from the continuous fight against the enemies that came up the ladders.

Then, what about the players? They could use their return spells, right? Unfortunately, the answer was no. Their returning point was set to Valhalla, and for them to get supplies or to transport anything, they still had to go through the thousands of enemy troops that surrounded their fortress. These series of frustrating events piled up and eventually put the entire Valhalla Fortress into the pits of despair.

Thuuuuuuuuuuuuud—

A huge trunk with a pointed tip slammed against the fortress' gates with the help of the enemies' siege weapons. They targeted the gates because its durability was infinitely weaker than that of the walls. The soldiers of Let's Eat Sect immediately descended and used their bodies to stop the gates from opening.

“Endure!!!”

“We can't back down here!!!”

“We have to hold out here!!!”

Thuuuuuuuuuuuuuuud—

“Euaaaaaaaack!”

“Heupppp!”

“Stand, stand up!!!”

The soldiers' screams began to engulf Valhalla.

“Keuaaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaack!”

However, despite doing their best, the enemies still continued to climb and enter the fortress using the ladders that they had successfully hung on the walls.

“Ugggghhh...”

“Shit...!”

The members of Let’s Eat Sect, who were blocking the gates with their own bodies, looked at the precarious condition of their walls. Although they were the best of the best and one of the country’s top rankers, they did not have any MP left. In fact, it was only thanks to Orgel’s continuous repair of their weapons that they were able to hold out this long.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

Genie watched in despair as their troops flew back with every hit of the siege weapon on their gates.

Shwaaaaaaa—

Then, rain suddenly started to pour down from the skies. This war could last for several days. However, they did not have any other opportunities to take advantage of. They had too many enemies and there would even be another 100,000 troops that would advance here sooner or later.

Baaaaaaang—

Another slam from the siege weapon and Genie was forced to let go of her tight hold on the gates. It was very frustrating. They all knew that Barras Kingdom would issue a ‘kill order’ to constantly kill off the members of Let’s Eat Sect the moment Valhalla got taken over. They could just run away and hide if that was the case but...

‘Thank you.’

...unlike them, the NPCs live in this world. This was their reality. Their troops devoted their lives, their entire beings, to protect this place for Minhyuk and for their loved ones, until the very end.

A sad expression lingered on Genie’s face as the cold rain poured down and soaked their bodies. But despite the cold rain, the soldiers still tried their best to cheer themselves up and increase their morale. On the other hand, the enemy troops rejoiced at the crumbling gates. They pulled back their siege weapon far as they rushed forward to make the final blow. But then...

Flaaaash—

...a woman descended down from the walls under the cold rain. One swing of her sword and the siege weapon cracked and fell into pieces.

Baaaaaaang—

Shwaaaaaaa—

With every swing of the woman’s sword, a siege weapon would crack and fall into pieces. This woman stood in front of the 20,000 strong troops and blocked them from the blood-stained walls and gates.

She was none other than Minhyuk's Extreme Hardcore Fan, the Sword Emperor Ellie. And today, using the sharp tip of her sword, she wrote the epic tale of Minhyuk's Extreme Hardcore Fan.

The battle between one and 20,000 troops was now starting.

Chapter 442: Extreme Hardcore Fan's Role

Loki and the other Pinnacle Strong Men had no choice but to look at the woman in confusion. She stood alone with her small physique, shabby leather armor, shabby helmet, and a fine-quality sword in front of the gates. And yet, every swing of her sword would make the gigantic siege weapons crumble into pieces.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

Baaaaaaaaang—

Fine cracks appeared all over the siege weapons before exploding into pieces, causing the dozens of soldiers that operated them to fly back. However, the most shocking part here was the fact that the siege weapons broke down with only one strike.

'What the hell is that woman?!'

'Was there such a strong person in Let's Eat Sect's troops?!'

'Who the hell are you?!'

Just when these thoughts crossed their minds, the woman who was blocking the gates suddenly said, "Long live Minhyuk! I will protect oppa's territory!"

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

'So strange?'

To most, the woman just seemed to be Let's East Sect's Guild Master Minhyuk's Extreme Hardcore Fan. But for Loki, she was a giant barrier that stopped them from moving forward. Loki immediately sent thirty elite and well-trained knights forward. Six of these knights dashed through the army's gaps and closed in on the woman, while the rest shot their crossbows at her.

Baaaaaaaaang—

However, the woman easily dragged in the sword attacks that the six knights sent towards her. Yes, that was right. The woman changed the trajectory of the swords and forced them to collide with her own.

Claaaaaaaaang—

When she brandished her sword once again, a powerful storm of sword lights engulfed the six knights and killed them all at once. As for the arrows?

Swish, swish—

She just twisted her body and moved her head to avoid them. What about the rest of the thirty knights? It only took less than two minutes for them to meet their deaths.

“I. Will. Protect. Oppa’s. Territory.”

“...!”

Loki gnashed his teeth. The inevitable destruction of the gates in front of them was being blocked by the damn b*tch. However, even if that was the case, the Pinnacle Strong Men still could not hastily make their move.

A man stepped forward next. He was Barras Kingdom’s Master Swordsman, Ruad. A genius of his own era, he stood at the peak and became a Master Swordsman using his own swordsmanship. If he had been born in either Eivelis or Collodis Empire and not in Barras Kingdom, the kingdom of production classes, then he might have become the continent’s Sword King.

“I’ll kill that annoying chick.”

Ruad was extremely loyal to King Grain. His loyalty was ingrained deep within his bones. He could not bear to see the delay of Valhalla’s fall just because of a single, unknown woman.

“If it’s you Ruad, then I can entrust this to you.”

Ruad and the Pinnacle Strong Men were different. In the first place, he was a part of the Barras Kingdom. On the other hand, the Pinnacle Strong Men were only driven by the rewards that the kingdom had offered. Loki judged that it was more than reasonable for Ruad to cut down the woman that was blocking their path. Besides, Ruad was also not that far behind the Pinnacle Strong Men in power.

When Ruad stepped forward, the Barras Kingdom Troops regained their confidence. They immediately judged that the woman’s head would fall off the moment Ruad made a move. Then, Ruad rushed towards Minhyuk’s Extreme Hardcore Fan.

Minhyuk’s Extreme Hardcore Fan, or Sword Emperor Ellie, grasped her sword tightly as she watched the rushing Ruad. She thought, *‘I can’t use Ellie’s Swordsmanship right now.’*

Even if their opponents were dumb, they would know that she was Ellie the moment she used Ellie’s Swordsmanship.

Then, what should she use?

‘I’ll use the Overlord’s Swordsmanship.’

One of Ellie’s ancestors was called ‘Overlord’ and was a prominent figure thousands of years ago. The name Overlord was a name that was widely spread in the past. In fact, it was a name that was far more famous and well-known than Ellie’s name now. Overlord was the one that established the Eivelis Empire from a small kingdom before. Ellie respected him the most and considered him as the greatest emperor.

This was because Overlord was a person that was born with a body that could not house any mana. But even though he could not cultivate any mana, he was able to cut down all of the swordsmen in the continent through his sheer effort and genius. A body that could not house any mana could only

possess a miniscule amount of mana no matter how hard they tried to accumulate mana in their bodies.

Thus, the Overlord's Swordsmanship was a swordsmanship that helped someone with a small amount of mana fight against all adversities.

Ellie had been learning the Overlord's Swordsmanship ever since she was young, in the event that she had to fight with a low MP. It was a sword technique that was passed down only to those that would sit on the throne and become the emperor. The greatest advantage here was that it was a swordsmanship that was completely unknown to the public.

The Overlord Swordsmanship was a technique that strengthened the body by utilizing the weak mana coursing through the wielder's veins. Simply put, it was a technique that awakened the sealed senses in one's body. The more the person's senses awakened, the more sensitive their senses would be. Back then, when the Overlord awakened his senses, it was said that they reached the absolute peak. This very same power, the power that could awaken one's senses, erupted and coursed through Ellie's body.

[Overlord's Swordsmanship Chapter 1. Lion's Awakening.]

[All stats will increase by 23%.]

[All of your senses will exert far greater power than usual.]

Although Ellie cast the skill, no effect was shown. Ruad dashed forward and thrust his sword towards her neck.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Ellie, using her toes, twisted her body slightly and narrowly avoided the sword that was whistling through the air and aiming for her neck. Ruad immediately twisted his wrist and chased after Ellie with his sword. But it was not that easy. Ellie grabbed the tip of his sword with her thumb and index finger, pushing it away before tilting her upper body slightly away and looking at the swinging sword once again.

"...?!"

"...?!"

"...?!"

Loki and the Pinnacle Strong Men's eyes went wide open in shock. The movements that the woman used were clean and precise. But the more shocking part was...

'She did not take a single step away from her position.'

'This is crazy...!'

Just when these thoughts flashed in their heads...

[Overlord's Swordsmanship Chapter 2. Lion's Stretch.]

Ellie lifted her sword up in the sky before slashing it down towards Ruad, who was still rushing towards her.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Just like a lion stretching its body, the sword stretched out and made Ruad fly back.

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!”

Despite being sent flying in the air, Ruad was still able to cast his skill and sent swordlights towards Ellie. But Ellie just slightly moved her neck, her toes, and her waist to avoid them, using the most minimal of movements despite the ground behind her being dug through and sunken from the harsh attacks.

Right now, Ellie’s senses had reached the pinnacle. The five senses originally included hearing, smell, taste, touch and vision. But the Overlord’s Swordsmanship’s senses were different. It excluded the ‘sense of taste’, which was the most useless in battle, and replaced it with a new sense in the form of reflection ability. The reflection ability could be said to be the pinnacle of the Overlord’s Swordsmanship, increasing the ability to avoid anything by two or three times.

Tap—

Ellie kicked the ground and flew up in the sky. Ruad took advantage of the opportunity and thrust his sword up. However, Ellie easily changed the trajectory of his sword by touching it with her own sword.

Clang, clang, clang, clang—

Ruad’s sword narrowly missed Ellie’s flanks. But then, at that moment, Ellie stabbed her sword at the joints of Ruad’s armor. With a twist of her wrist, a powerful force appeared and gathered at the tip of her sword.

[Overlord’s Swordsmanship Chapter 5. Lion’s Roar.]

Clang, clang, clang—

Then, the mana that gathered at the tip of her sword entered through the joints of Ruad’s armor and spread throughout his body. And like a lion’s roar...

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

...Ruad’s armor exploded into pieces. The now armorless Ruad was in a daze. Loki and the Pinnacle Strong Men immediately dashed forward when they saw Ruad fall in a perplexed daze. But Ellie was a step faster than them. They aimed for her heart but...

[Overlord’s Swordsmanship Chapter 12. Lion Stalking its Prey.]

...Ellie’s sword accurately stabbed Ruad’s vital points five times in a row.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

“Urk!” Ruad groaned and vomited a mouthful of blood before falling on the ground. The Master Swordsman’s final breath was spent in vain. The Pinnacle Strong Men stopped in their tracks.

“Go in between the troops,” Loki ordered. The Pinnacle Strong Men immediately moved to hide among the troops. They joined this war to gain a foothold and an advantage, but if they tried to fight that woman then...

‘We’ll die.’

Who the hell was that woman? She stood in front of the gates alone to fight against 20,000 troops, but she was not losing her ground against them. She even looked like a ghost with her five senses awakened to the absolute pinnacle.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

With the soldiers falling down one after another, the troops had no choice but to take a step back and retreat. They could not come anywhere near her. Her sword was stained with the blood of thousands of enemies but she did not look exhausted at all.

Thuuuuuuuud—

One of the enemies flew up and fell down like a bomb in the middle of their camp. With every swing of her sword, dozens of her enemies would fall down.

Slaaaaaaash—

Dozens of heads would be separated from their bodies the moment she threw her sword out. After losing her weapon for a moment, she grabbed the dagger from her waist and...

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven... fifty people around her died with a single stab on their necks. It was both shocking and worthy of admiration. The blood from the soldiers’ throats dyed her helmet red. It was like the advent of an evil spirit.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Ruuuuun!!!”

“Hiiiiiiiiiiik!”

“A demon! She’s a demon!”

[The troops’ morale dramatically decreases.]

[A nerve-wracking terror engulfs their entire being.]

[All of their stats will decrease by 25%.]

The 20,000 strong troops ran away in front of a single woman. This was a very shocking feat. Then, at that moment...

Vwooooooooooong—

A loud blare from the trumpet rang loudly in the battlefield. Ellie looked around coldly. A sea of black appeared and surrounded Valhalla. It looked like it was a huge army of 130,000 troops. A flag with the crest of a ‘hammer and kitchen knife’, symbolizing the Barras Kingdom was raised high up in the sky. And the shocking army shouted all at once...

“Victory!”

“Victory!”

“Take the enemies’ necks!”

“Take the enemies’ necks!”

Everywhere was surrounded by a sea of black. The shocking momentum of their reinforcement was enough to make even Ellie cringe. Cold sweat started to drip from Ellie’s hands as the enemy troops slowly advanced forward. However, she still continued to cut down the enemies in front of her.

‘Minhyuk, where on earth are you?’

[Minhyuk’s Extreme Hardcore Fan is bringing terror to the 20,000 strong troops all by herself!]

[What in the world is that woman?!]

[Some are assuming that she is Ellie, but the swordsmanship that she is using is completely different from the swordsmanship that Ellie uses.]

[But there is one thing that we are sure of. She alone is terrorizing the 20,000 strong troops.]

[Huh? HUUUUUUUUUH?! Is that the sound of a trumpet?!?!]

[More than 100,000 troops have appeared and surrounded Valhalla!!!]

[Their shouts have shaken Valhalla, bringing them to the depths of despair!]

Trudge—

Minhyuk, who finally opened his eyes, staggered to the living room and headed straight towards the television that Changwook had turned on to watch.

‘Noona.’

Minhyuk could already tell the situation in Valhalla with just one look at the video presented on the TV.

“Minhyuk?!” Changwook shouted in surprise as he hurriedly stood up to support the struggling Minhyuk.

Minhyuk’s father, Kang Minhoo, also hurried out of his room after hearing the commotion. He said, “Minhyuk, you’re awake?!”

“I have to go, Dad.”

“You can’t! You need to calm down!”

He had been working too hard. He would not have collapsed if he simply pulled up an all-nighter. The problem was that Minhyuk had also pushed ahead with his ‘diet’. On top of playing in Athenae, he had also been exercising for five hours every day. The amount of time that he slept was only the bare minimum. He should be in a completely stable state, but more than 100,000 troops had suddenly appeared around Valhalla.

“I want to show it to them.”

The results of his one month of hard work could turn the tides of war. His father, Kang Minhoo, could no longer dissuade Minhyuk after seeing his firm will and determination. Minhyuk immediately went into his Athenae capsule to access the game but...

[Your psychological state is unstable.]

[You will not be able to connect.]

[It is recommended that you take a good rest before logging back in the game.]

Athenae was a virtual reality game and every capsule in production was equipped with the function to recognize the person's brain waves and check their physical condition. Minhyuk, who woke up after being unconscious for a few days, was in a dire state, both physically and mentally. In fact, even now, his vision was shaking.

“Why...?!” Minhyuk shouted, his face turning ugly.

Kang Minhoo could only smile bitterly at Minhyuk after seeing him get out of the capsule in frustration. He said, “Your Dad will stop them first.”

“...”

Minhyuk looked at his father in guilt. His son had just woken up but he was already trying to play games. However, Kang Minhoo, as his father, knew that *Athenae*, the place that helped cure his son, was like another reality for Minhyuk. It was a world filled with people that he wanted to protect and cherish. Kang Minhoo, or Black Dragon, had also prepared a lot during Minhyuk's absence so he wanted to show it to his son too. Then, he entered his own capsule.

The king of dragons, Black Dragon, had connected to *Athenae*.

Chapter 443: A Bet with the Gods. And Cooking.

A smile hung on Duke Yverone's lips as he looked at the 130,000 strong army that he was leading. Duke Yverone, just like Eivelis Empire's Marquis Brad, was hailed as the continent's Spear Master.

He could not help but chuckle deeply as he watched the situation in front of him and thought, ‘*Let's Eat Sect is falling apart.*’

He was sure that the Let's Eat Sect would fall apart under the pressure of their 130,000 strong army. After all, Valhalla looked like they had no more troops that could fight against them.

‘*Although most of the troops that I'm leading are just newly conscripted soldiers.*’

Still, they could at least be useful as meat shields. After all, it would be ridiculously absurd for a measly amount of troops to stop their 130,000 strong troops.

Vwoooooooooong—

The loud blare of the horn signaled the advance of the troops.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

The ground shook and trembled with every step they took. It was like a noose slowly tightening around Valhalla, with the loud thuds of their footsteps and their ever increasing momentum.

Ellie gritted her teeth at the number of enemies advancing towards Valhalla. That number meant that a single release of arrows and magic would send at least 100,000 attacks towards her.

'Even if I use and release all of my power..'

It would prove to be difficult for her to defeat them. However, she did not stop cutting down the enemies that approached her. Finally, more than 100,000 troops shot their arrows into the sky. There were only 1,000 remaining troops around Ellie, aside from these, the remaining ones were in the rear waiting for reinforcements.

'So I only have a thousand allies?'

Ellie's face turned ugly at the sight of the thousands of arrows flying towards Valhalla. She immediately used a huge square shield and hid behind it to escape from the rain of arrows.

"Keuaaaaaack!"

"Aaaaaaaaack!"

"Ughhhhhh!"

'That goddamn commander.'

The commander that was leading the enemy troops was foolish. They were about to win the war with the troops from Valhalla Fortress already on the verge of death, but they were still sacrificing their own allies. Regardless, the 130,000 troops were already fast-approaching.

"Can... I do it alone?" A wry smile grazed the corners of Ellie's lips as she murmured to herself.

Just then...

"You're not alone, Miss Extreme Hardcore Fan," Genie said as she approached her. Genie felt extreme admiration and respect for the woman named Ellie. When all of them had given up, she stopped their enemies all by herself. Of course, the difference in terms of the number of forces was glaring, but she never wavered nor ran away, focusing only on stopping the enemies.

"You have us too."

Genie, Crow, Abel, Alicia, Lucia, Ace, Ghost Spear Ben, Sword Saint Conir, Best Selling Author Aruvel, and Talmor Religion's Head Corr were all left in a situation where they did not have much MP left to cast skills. However, they all decided to fight.

"Miss Extreme Hardcore Fan, I have a request."

"A request?"

"Please lead Ben, Aruvel, Corr, Conir, and the citizens of Valhalla away."

"..."

Ellie could understand what Genie was saying.

'A foreigner's life is infinite.'

Unlike them, the guardians' lives would be over once they died in this place. Asking her this favor meant that they wanted to protect these people.

"We'll open a path for you."

Ellie looked at the members of Let's Eat Sect. Genie was completely exhausted, blood dripping all over her body. Crow's arm was injured and completely unusable. Lucia was also using a broken dagger, since she had no time to get it repaired before jumping in the fray again.

'I did not expect that the foreigners and the guardians would be in great harmony...'

Ellie did not believe and trust the foreigners. But now, these foreigners were trying their best to protect the guardians, to the point that they were willing to sacrifice their lives for them.

'Minhyuk, the kingdom that you are building is completely amazing.'

Ellie nodded slowly to show her acceptance.

"Hahaha. Lady Extreme Hardcore Fan, please take good care of our Conir, Corr and Aruvel," Ghost Spear Ben said as he stepped forward. He looked tired but he was smiling and his eyes were still shining fiercely.

"I have to open one more path to save one more person."

"Grandpa Ben."

"I've never learnt the words *back down*," Ghost Spear Ben said, ramming his spear down on the ground.

Meanwhile, the kingdom troops continued to narrow the distance between them. However, Ben believed that he would be able to stop the enemies' advance for a moment if he gave up his life.

"Conir won't go! Conir will protect hyung's territory!" Conir declared as he stood beside Ben.

The same was true for Best Selling Author Aruvel. He stood beside them and declared, "I'm going to get good inspiration today and create a great work. A story about a knight who fell in love with the enemy. What do you think?!"

"I will free these poor and pitiful souls from hair loss!"

Genie looked at them with a bitter smile on her face and thought, *'Thank you, everyone.'*

But this was different. Even if they were very determined to stay here and fight, they had to survive and live another day.

Genie let out a trembling breath after finishing the conversation with Ali. The 130,000 strong troops were just around the corner. Ghost Spear Ben was the first to run out which signaled the start of the battle.

For the longest time, there was only one man that was considered the best BJ in Korea. He had been on the top of the rankings of Ztube and Paprika TV ever since the launch of the virtual reality game. His nickname was 'Know-it-all Dictionary' and the reason why he was loved by all people was because there was nothing that he did not know about the game that he was playing, hence the nickname.

And this very same Know-it-all Dictionary was speaking enthusiastically, "My dear viewers, can you see this? Let's Eat Sect is making their final struggle in this fierce battle against the 130,000 troops!"

His body trembled at the sight. In an uphill battle against a 130,000-strong army, the members of Let's Eat Sect did not back down. Then, at that moment, the mysterious Extreme Hardcore Fan stepped forward and cut down the enemies with her sword. Vice Guild Master Genie immediately followed behind her and used her whip to break down the shields that blocked their path. Ghost Spear Ben leapt up in the air before throwing his spear as hard as he could towards the enemy troops, killing them in one single blow.

What about the Best Selling Author Aruvel? He was also displaying his amazing spearmanship that was on par with Ghost Spear Ben's own. Then, there was Rameon Boy Conir, he was cutting down his enemies with his sword and moving swiftly like a ghost.

"Wow..." Know-it-all Dictionary might be a BJ, but as an Athenae player, he could not help but look at them in admiration. Right now, Know-it-all Dictionary has ushered in his largest number of viewers.

[Let's Eat Sect is so cool...]

[That's what a real ranker is. Even though they are fighting against more than 100,000 enemies, they are still not backing down.]

[Their MPs have tanked out right? So, does that mean that they're all holding out with their control alone...? Are they even human?]

[Don't you think that it's like watching a scene from a movie?]

The viewers were all in awe of their battle. They were clearly losing in the battle of attrition, but it seemed like their embers were still glowing and burning brightly. Of course, it was mainly because Extreme Hardcore Fan's display of power and force was perfect right now.

'I want to be on their side and fight together with them.' Just when this thought flashed in Know-it-all Dictionary's head, magic bombs began to fall down from the sky.

Extreme Hardcore Fan split more than a hundred magic bombs with her sword.

However, the ones that she failed to split fell down on the people behind her.

"Keuaaaack!"

"Aaaack!"

"Ugh!"

Screams were ripped out of the mouths of the members of Let's Eat Sect.

'What amazing defense?!'

Still, they kept on moving forward, despite the bombs that constantly fell on them. The members of Let's Eat Sect not dying against the onslaught of the magic bombs was a terrifyingly amazing feat in and of itself.

"So, they're trying to make a path for retreat."

Know-it-all Dictionary looked worried. That was 130,000 enemies. It was not easy to open a path of retreat in the middle of 130,000 strong troops.

"To save their troops?"

In fact, they could just use Mass Teleport for the Named NPCs. The fact that they were willing to sacrifice themselves to try to open a path for retreat meant they were going to allow the citizens and soldiers of Valhalla to flee.

'They're truly amazing.'

However, opening a path for retreat was not easy at all. They could create a path to a certain degree, but the places where the soldiers died were quickly being filled in. Genie and Ellie gritted their teeth as they continued to fight in this battle.

'Shit... We can't open a path...'

'Everyone's exhausted. They can't open a path.'

If they only had more MP then they could create a path by using AOE skills. Ellie wondered if she should use all of her power now. However, even if she did that, she knew that it would not work out well and would only bring a negative impact on Minhyuk and Let's Eat Sect.

At this time, Ali, who had been using his snakes to fill up his MP, smiled lightly and said, "It's enough."

However, this also meant that the members of Let's Eat Sect would be forced to log out soon. Everyone would collapse as soon as he sent the Named NPCs away. Ali swung his Staff of Despair the moment he saw Genie nod. But then...

[You have been trapped in a Mana Barrier.]

[You will not be able to use magic and your MP will be drained by the Mana Barrier.]

"...?!"

Ali's face turned ugly as an old man wearing a white robe stepped forward. This old man was none other than Berion, the head of Barras Kingdom's royal mages. He was known as one of the continent's supreme mages. He was someone that had already retired, but he participated in the war at the behest of King Grain.

"Unfortunately, you won't be able to escape."

The remnants from what seemed to be a stone placed in Berion's scattered in the air. Ali was fully aware of what it was.

'Mana stone.'

A mana stone was an item that not only increased the person's mana, but also doubled their INT and WIS upon usage. As a restriction, the user could only use one magic with double the power. In other words, Berion had predicted this situation and prepared everything in advance.

"God damn it! Guild members! Protect the NPCs!!!" Genie gnashed her teeth.

The guild members also realized the situation that they were in. The enemies would not let the NPCs escape easily.

"What do you mean by protect us? We'll protect you!"

"You can't!!! Please don't be stubborn!!!" Genie pleaded with Ghost Spear Ben. Ben could hear the sincerity in her voice, but he never once backed down in his life, so he tried his best to ignore her words.

"Minhyuk... Minhyuk will be sad!!!"

"..."

Ghost Spear Ben gritted his teeth. That was his lord, the person that he treated like he was his own son! As his vassal, leaving this world without seeing him for the last time would be very unfaithful. Ben silently went back and blended in with the guild members. The guild members gave their all and threw everything away to protect the NPCs. But then, the kingdom troops began their full-scale attack. The knights sent hundreds of sword lights while the mages kept on sending magic bombs.

"Ugh!"

The guild members guarded the NPCs and blocked the enemy attacks with their own bodies. Crow threw himself in front of Ghost Spear Ben and blocked the arrow that was aiming for Ben, watching as it impaled his stomach.

Stab—

“Keuhaaaack!”

One of the knights' spear pierced through Genie, while Abel and Lucia continued to fight desperately to create a path of retreat for the NPCs. However, one of the mage's magic would reach Lucia and force her to disappear.

“Lucia!” Abel shouted in despair.

At the same time, one of the Pinnacle Strong Men aimed for Conir with his powerful sword strike. Flaaaaash—

Abel immediately threw himself to block the sword light.

“Keuhaaaaaaaaaack!”

Abel, whose body was split in half from the attack, slowly disappeared.

“Conir... Conir is sad... Abel... sorry...” Conir said, fat droplets of tears lining his cheeks.

“Protect them! Protect every single one of them! You can't let any of them die!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!”

The guild members screamed loudly as they made their final struggle.

Joy Co. Ltd.'s president, Kang Taehoon, watched the video inside the conference room with the rest of the executive members. He felt his heart tremble and shake as the thought, ‘*The Athenae that I dreamed of...*’ flashed in his head.

A world where everyone accepted the NPCs as people and became friends with them, and not just consider them as some measly artificial intelligence. This was the world that he wanted to create. However, it proved to be difficult since most people only considered the NPCs as simple artificial intelligence.

However, on the screen in front of him, Let's Eat Sect was making their final stand to protect these NPCs.

Regardless of their struggles, it seemed like they could not hold out any longer. They eventually collapsed. Genie, with a spear stuck on her abdomen, retreated while vomiting a mouthful of blood. Even Crow was covered with swords and slashes. However, they did not back down and even went so far as to rush forward.

The worst part? Ben had to step forward and fight too. But soon, he also could not hold out and was forced to kneel down on one knee.

‘*My heart aches.*’

Athenae was, after all, a dog-eat-dog kind of world. It seemed like Let's Eat Sect would eventually collapse. Loki, one of the Pinnacle Strong Men, approached the collapsed Ghost Spear Ben and tried to behead him.

“...”

President Kang Taehoon shut his eyes. Ghost Spear Ben cherished Minhyuk like he was his own son, so he did not want to see him die.

“He’s going to hit...”

President Kang Taehoon unknowingly clenched his fists when he heard the voices of the executives around him. But then, at that moment...

Claaaaaang—

A clear and loud sound of iron meeting iron rang out loudly. Was it the sound of a sword blocking the attack? No.

“Where did that arrow come from?”

“A small arrow was able to block Loki’s sword?”

Hearing the commotion that started to brew among the executives, President Kang Taehoon slowly opened his eyes. What greeted him was the flustered Loki who was busy looking around trying to search for the enemy that sent the arrow. Just when Loki gave up on finding the source and was about to swing his sword again...

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

...arrows appeared again and pierced his heart in quick succession.

“...?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

The door suddenly slammed open while the executives were still trying to reel in their shock. Team Leader Park, with a messy head and red eyes, barged inside the room. His dead eyes, which looked strangely similar to Dongtae, was burning with life and determination once again as he smiled subtly at the monitor. He said, “They’re finally here...”

Everyone, including President Kang Taehoon, looked at the monitor as Team Leader Park continued to say, “...Player Minhyuk’s miracle.”

1. The protagonist of DICE, someone with very dark undereye

Chapter 444: A Bet with the Gods. And Cooking.

President Kang Taehoon looked at Team Leader Park Minggyu in confusion.

Team Leader Park was fully aware about the things that Player Minhyuk had prepared for this war, as well as the diplomatic activities that he participated in. He also knew the person that was wielding her sword to protect his territory.

However, President Kang Taehoon had explicitly told them that they did not need to report anything if they judged that it would interfere with the *Athenae* player’s play. Also, the walls had ears. On the off chance that the executives and employees heard his report and relayed it to the guilds that they have connections with, then the enemies might reverse the situation and stop the advancing troops that came to help Let’s Eat Sect. So, Park Minggyu decided not to report it.

Even Kang Taehoon, the president, was no exception to this. And this was one of the qualities that the president liked about Minggyu.

“...Miracle?” Kang Taehoon asked in doubt. Minggyu just pointed towards the monitor as if he did not need to say anything to explain.

The cameras that were broadcasting the scene hurriedly shuffled around to try and find the owner of the arrow. After moving around for quite a while, they finally closed up on a distant hill around three kilometers away from Loki. There, on top of that hill, stood a white warhorse carrying a man with pointed ears, long elegant hair, and an aloof, noble gaze. Everyone looked at the man in admiration.

[El, elf...?!]

One of the commentators shouted in shock. However, the shocking events did not end there. Thousands of white warhorses, all carrying elves, appeared one after the other behind the man that shot the arrow. And the identity of the man that shot that arrow was...

[It's Elf King Gorn!!!]

[Prince Argon, the elf that has reached the level of archery that no player could ever achieve, and the son of Elf King Gorn, has also appeared!!!]

President Kang Taehoon jumped up from his seat the moment he heard the shocked voices of the commentators ringing loudly in the room.

At the same time, in another place.

It was abrupt and sudden, but fortunately, one of the broadcasting stations' cameras, the camera that was filming the battle from the sky, captured the scene of unidentified men piercing through the enemies' ranks from the other side of the path that the members of Let's Eat Sect were desperately trying to create. These men were all wearing dark robes and asura masks that covered their faces. The most noteworthy part? All of them were wielding spears and using spear arts that had transcended the level of any regular knight.

The troops could not hold out against them and were forced to back down and make way for them. The scene looked exactly like Moses' miracle with how quickly they separated to let these spearmen pass through. This group, led by Spear Master Marquis Brad, was composed of either disciples that had learned spearmanship from Ghost Spear Ben, or spearmen that dreamt of meeting him. They all stood in front of Ghost Spear Ben as Spear Master Brad's spear cut through the air and pierced through Loki's already pierced chest and forced him to vomit blood and collapse. They passed by the collapsed Pinnacle Strong Man and created a defensive circle with a slam of their spears, protecting Ghost Spear Ben and the members of Let's Eat Sect.

At this moment, the chests of all of the viewers watching this scene, especially Know-it-all Dictionary's viewers, felt their hearts burn ablaze. The scene even catapulted Know-it-all Dictionary's viewers to an all-time record-breaking high.

Then, the elves, led by Elf King Gorn, began to unleash their arrows.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

The arrows that the elves shot were eerily accurate, despite being thousands of meters away from the kingdom troops. They easily shot the troops' eyes, necks, and other vital points, wiping them out. Additionally, when Elf King Gorn and Crown Prince Argon released their own arrows...

Thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack—

...their single arrow turned into hundreds of arrows and accurately pierced through the necks of their enemies.

Then, Elf King Gorn, who was sitting mightily on his horse, pulled out his sword and shouted, “For Let’s Eat Sect!!!”

“For Let’s Eat Sect!!!”

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

Bathump, bathump—

Know-it-all Dictionary felt his heart beat wildly at the sight of five thousand elven troops rushing towards the 130,000 enemy troops. The moment Elf King Gorn’s troops clashed with the enemies...

Slaaaaash—

...they immediately dug through the enemies’ gaps, fighting fiercely to push them away.

Know-it-all Dictionary took this time to say, “Are you guys seeing this?! Right now, a miracle is happening in front of us! That’s Elf King Gorn! It is a well-known fact that Player Minhyuk had saved Prince Argon during the Demon World Invasion Episode. And now, Elf King Gorn, the great and noble king of elves, stepped forward with his brethren to fight for Minhyuk!”

Know-it-all Dictionary shared the information that he had in his hands to enhance the thrill that the viewers were feeling from watching his stream.

[Wow. I can feel my heart flutter. Did he come here to repay the favor from back then?]

[But, aren’t elves very hostile towards humans?]

[Yo, who in the world are those men holding spears? Are they a spear unit?]

[There are tens of thousands of enemies trying to pierce through the spearmen’s defensive circle but they can’t pierce through. Are they for real? Hahahaha.]

The spearmen were as active as the elves in this battle. They were protecting the members of Let’s Eat Sect while maintaining the perfect defensive circle. That was when the notification window suddenly popped up in front of Know-it-all Dictionary.

[MinhyukOppaILoveYou has sponsored you with 500 Moon Balloons]

[WhenWillArugelReleaseHisNewWork has sponsored you with 1,000 Moon Balloons.]

[BeanieCutie has sponsored you with 800 Moon Balloons.]

The Moon Balloon sponsorship rate of Know-it-all Dictionary dramatically increased. Unlike other BJs, Know-it-all Dictionary used a first person perspective in all of his live broadcasts which gave the viewers a different feeling, as if they were there and watching it themselves.

[FoodGod'sSupporter has sponsored you with 1,000,000 Moon Balloons.]

The unknown and mysterious FoodGod'sSupporter sponsored Know-it-all Dictionary with ninety million Moon Balloons in one go and made him achieve a phenomenal record.

“Haaaaa?” Know-it-all Dictionary's breath stopped for a moment.

He had been given offers and scouted by countless guilds so that he could broadcast for them. After all, he was the best BJ in Ztube, PaprikaTV, and many more live streaming platforms. However, he had never been bought over by money.

But at this moment, he decided, *'Let's Eat Sect. That's where I'll go, that's where I belong!'*

However, the things that could make his veins thrum in excitement were not yet over. The Barras Kingdom's troops, who were flustered and in chaos from the sudden appearance of the elves and the spearmen, were slowly coming back to their senses. Just as he was watching how the troops were about to form an attack formation to break through the elves and the spearmen's defensive circle...

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

...an unknown and mysterious tidal wave suddenly appeared in Know-it-all Dictionary's sight.

The twenty meter-tall tidal wave carried bipedal beastmen, two rabbitmen and one turtleman, on top of it. The three beastmen looked like they were surfing on the huge tide, a sight that was so shocking that even Know-it-all Dictionary could not take his eyes off of them. In a blink, the huge, twenty meter-tall tidal wave crashed down on the ground and engulfed tens of thousands of the kingdom troops in one fell swoop.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Everything, whether it was man or architecture, was powerless in front of a natural disaster. What more when faced with a twenty meter-tall tidal wave that was packed with a very strong momentum?

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Quite a number of the soldiers of Barras Kingdom's troops drowned and died on the spot from the sudden appearance of the tidal wave, while the rest of them were left in a daze and unable to come back to their senses. Surprisingly enough, the tidal wave left the elves, the spearmen and the members of Let's Eat Sect alone.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

The mysterious rabbitmen and turtlemen, who stood on top of the tidal wave, also fought fiercely as they dealt with all of the soldiers that they passed by.

“Ugh!” Duke Yverone, who finally pulled his head out of the water, gasped for breath.

“Gasp, gasp.”

Yverone looked around him in confusion. However, what greeted him was a two meter-tall being, with the face of a catfish and a long whitebeard wearing a golden king’s robe and holding a trident in his hand. This being stood atop a giant crab, while hundreds of sharkmen warriors stood beneath him.

‘Dragon, Dragon King?!’

The man was none other than the King of the Seas, the Dragon King.

Yverone could not understand why the king of the seas and the king of the elves stepped forward to protect Minhyuk, when they had never interrupted and joined in any of the conflicts that arose between humans before.

Puhaaaaaaaaaak!

Jets of water sprang up from the ground and pierced through the hearts of the soldiers with every swing of the Dragon King’s trident.

‘He’s really strong...’

Each of the soldiers that these kings have led were far more powerful than any ordinary soldiers. But what was more surprising was...

‘Who in the world are those spearmen?!’

Yverone was someone that stood on par with Marquis Brad as the continent’s Spear Master, so he could tell that the spearmen that appeared to protect the members of Let’s Eat Sect had reached a shocking level in terms of spearmanship.

In just an instant, 20,000 of his troops had died. However, Yverone’s shock and fluster only lasted for a moment. Even if 20,000 of his troops had died, they still had a little over 100,000 left. Right now, they might still have the momentum, but once their MP and STM ran out, then they would just be ducks waiting for the slaughter. There was also the damage to their weapons.

“Don’t back down! They will eventually fall under our hands!”

Rather than fear, Yverone felt that this was his chance. Simply put, he was thinking that this was their chance to swallow the land of the elves and the dragon king’s palace.

‘And if we take the kings as our prisoners of war then...’

He could not even imagine the value of what they would be able to gain from that. Just like that, the surviving Pinnacle Strong Men immediately stepped forward to keep the Dragon King, Elf King Gorn and Argon in check. They were also aware that they would be able to gain a lot of benefits if they won this battle.

Just when these thoughts flashed in Yverone’s head, something black suddenly dropped down from the sky. The moment it descended, hundreds of troops disappeared. It was as if a meteor had descended upon them.

“...?!”

Yverone turned to look back in doubt, only to see Black Dragon getting up slowly.

[Black Dragon has made his appearance!!!]

[Black Dragon! It has been a long time since we last saw him but he finally appeared!!!]

And with his appearance...

Kiyeeeeeeeeee!?

Kieeeeeeeeeeeck!

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

Thousands of members of the dragon race descended from the skies. They were the Black Dragon Legion, a legion composed of the scattered dragon race warriors. They were now far stronger and greater than they were before. And...

“Fufufufufu!?” Wallow in despair. You all should drink this poisoned wine!”

“Fufu!” How dare you measly humans try to deal with people born like us?”

...their chuunibyone-ness had also reached its peak. On top of that, the power that they possessed was far more overwhelming than their previous appearance.

With their addition to the fray, the troops that Barras Kingdom had led here to deal with the Let's Eat Sect started decreasing rapidly. The commentators were quick to relay the sudden change in the battlefield's situation.

[Black Dragon, Elf King Gorn, Dragon King and the unknown spearmen all appeared to help Let's Eat Sect.]

[However, the fact that they are inferior in terms of numbers in this 'battle of attrition' would not change. We can assume that the alliance that came to protect Let's Eat Sect will eventually be pushed back.]

[That might be the case, but this is still a battle featuring four different races. I don't think we'll be able to see anything like this again, even if we want to see it in the future. This is a great battle that will leave its mark in Athenae's history.]

[How many enemies will Let's Eat Sect be able to kill in this battle? I think that's also a very important question to consider.]

The commentators, who were gushing in admiration, suddenly stopped in confusion as they focused on Elf King Gorn. This was because the king of the elves was smiling subtly towards someone. Even Argon, who was standing next to his father, was smiling too. The cameras also captured the members of Let's Eat Sect turning towards this someone. And Ali...

“Frieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeend!”

...called out passionately. Of course, the cameras immediately turned and followed the direction that they were looking at. The commentators shouted in excitement when they saw who it was.

[He has appeared!]

[Let's Eat Sect's King, Korea's, no, the world's strongest player has appeared!]

[He has not made an appearance earlier but it seems like we can finally see him in action!]

Everyone, both Koreans and people from all over the world, that were tuned in on the broadcast focused on the figure of the man. At long last, he has made his appearance. He jumped on top of the fortress' walls and brought disaster upon their enemies.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

When he slammed his sword on the ground, a violent earthquake erupted and swallowed more than 5,000 troops in one go. The man rushed forward through the disaster that he released and handed something to the members of Let's Eat Sect and the NPCs. The members of Let's Eat Sect bawled out, but the man ignored them. He looked like he was in a hurry. Not long after, the man put something in his mouth and...

Crunch, crunch, crunch—

[???

[???

The commentators were all perplexed as they watched the man, who appeared miraculously in front of the exhausted members of Let's Eat Sect, chew and swallow something. And with a smile of relief, the man called out, "Elpis, Brod."

In a flash of light, two figures appeared. They were Let's Eat Sect's Sword and Shield.

1. A parody of star balloons, the sponsorship system of AfreecaTV

Chapter 445: A Bet with the Gods. And Cooking.

The Let's Eat Sect, the Let's Eat Sect Punishment Alliance, the Barras Kingdom, even the countless people that were watching from all over the world, had been waiting for the appearance of one person and one person alone. This was because they thought that he would be able to turn this desperate situation around. Countless people, despite not being able to reach his level, could not help but anticipate his arrival, so they could watch and admire his display of power.

When he suddenly appeared, he just handed some kind of dish to the members of Let's Eat Sect, hurriedly ate something and summoned two men, before logging out.

"...?"

"...?"

"...?"

[...?]

[...?]

[...?]

The members of Let's Eat Sect, the viewers, and even the commentators that had been waiting for him were all dumbfounded.

[Player Minhyuk disappeared immediately after summoning two unknown men.]

[What is happening?]

[Player Minhyuk disappeared in less than five minutes, leaving behind two unknown men and several mysterious dishes.]

The people's expectations, the huge expectations that they had for Minhyuk, cooled down at the appearance of two unknown men. The same was true for ATV Broadcasting Station's commentators. Even PD Kim Daeguk, today's special commentator, frowned at the scene.

'He looks a bit familiar?'

There were times when PD Kim would focus on an entirely different thing, than the rest of the people around him. This phenomenon was mostly attributed to his instincts. However, there were times when his instincts would be spot on.

Right now, he felt that one of the men that had just appeared looked extremely familiar. Before he could even brood on this thought, the bright light that covered the two men finally disappeared. The two already had their swords unsheathed and ready for battle. One of the men had a stalk of hay in his mouth, but the sword in his hand was filled with unfathomable force.

"Mercenary's Pinnacle Swordsmanship, Final Chapter."

And when the man swung his sword...

"Wolf's Death."

...hundreds of sword lights flew fiercely, like red wolves rushing for the kill. When these sword lights collided with the soldiers...

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash—

...their bodies were ripped apart and torn to pieces, as if they had been mauled by wolves. The entire thing only took 0.1 seconds. However, the attack did not stop there. After ripping the soldiers in front apart, the attack continued forward and ripped apart the soldiers standing behind the ones before. More than 4,000 soldiers and knights died without even letting out a single scream from the man's lone strike.

"Hiiiiiiiiik!" Yverone shrieked.

[What, what just happened...?]

[Is that even possible? This is impossible. Even though I'm watching it with my own eyes, I still can't bring myself to believe it.]

That was not the end yet. The other man, who had a pair of earphones stuck in his ears, swung his black sword. However, he suddenly stopped in his tracks as if he forgot something. Then, the man took away the earphones in his ears, activated the listening function, and played the sweet melody of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata's Third Movement loudly on the battlefield. The sudden appearance of the piano's fast tempo made everyone focus on the music.

For some reason, this fast paced tempo sounded like it was announcing the advent of the devil. Then, the man swung his sword strongly. Simply put, Elpis had expressed himself and his strongest sword attack towards his enemies, the very same way that wiped out Callian and the 4,000 strong troops that came with him just recently.

“Devil Judge.”

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The moment Elpis slammed his sword on the ground, tiny black beads rose from the ground, in front of the thousands of enemy soldiers focused on the music. These black beads, packed with additional 2,500% attack, floated in front of them for a moment before exploding.

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

None of the troops were able to let out a single scream. They could not handle the power of Elpis’ move which was heaped on top of his basic attack. The explosion engulfed an area with a fifty meter radius and left no bodies intact.

Everyone present at the scene all went silent. The Barras Kingdom troops and the Pinnacle Strong Men did not even dare to breathe. They feared that the two masterminds of this massacre would come for them if they so let out a single, shaky breath.

[What the hell...]

The commentators could not put what they were feeling into words. At first, they thought that the Let’s Eat Sect’s engines would be truly and utterly spent after Minhyuk, who they thought would be the guild’s savior, appeared and suddenly disappeared. However the two beings that he summoned, whom they ignored at first, could easily trample on and break the momentum of the 100,000 strong troops.

Even Let’s Eat Sect’s allies were very surprised by this.

Crown Prince Argon’s pupils shook as he thought, *‘Minhyuk, what kind of people have you taken in as your vassals?’*

It was not just him. The ruler of the seas, the Dragon King also thought, *‘Are they really beings from the middle world?’*

Even the Spear Master, Marquis Brad was thinking, *‘Master Ben, I think I already know the reason why you’re living in this territory willingly.’*

Everyone was left speechless as they watched Let’s Eat Sect’s Sword and Shield in admiration. While the allied armies and the enemy troops stopped fighting to watch the two...

Slurp, slurp, slurp, slurp—

Chew, chew, chew—

Chomp, chomp, chomp, chomp—

“Kahaha. The dish that my son, no, my lord, cooked is really superb! This is really delicious!”

“I’m telling you, I always think of Minhyuk’s food whenever I feel exhausted!”

“Wow. This sushi tastes amazing.”

...the voices of the members of Let's Eat Sect being protected by the spearmen rang loudly as they spread the food in front of them and ate them with relish. Their voices broke the overbearing silence from earlier.

[Those are the dishes that Player Minhyuk gave them when he appeared briefly. They're probably buffed dishes.]

[I wonder how good it is? How can they get so into the food that they can't even pay attention to the situation around them?]

[I heard that you can hear a heavenly harmony the moment you take a bite of Player Minhyuk's dishes. I really look forward to trying that.]

[They all looked like they were about to die just now. That old man named Ghost Spear Ben was even just about to be beheaded earlier. But now, he's eating merrily while bleeding from his chest. Ah! He's eating even though his chest is bleeding!]

[Bounty Hunter Crow even has an arrow on his back...]

[...Miss Ascar looks like both of her legs have been broken but she's smiling while eating.]

[Even Miss Extreme Hardcore Fan looks like she's in awe of the food that she's eating. But she's the only one that looks fine.]

[This scene is a bit grotesque.]

The commentators looked at them in curiosity. They were in the middle of a war, but they were eating like crazy. Was the food really that good that they could even forget their current situation? Of course that was one of the reasons. However, the main reason why they were eating like crazy was because...

'The war will end once we eat this food.'

They were all convinced about this.

Back in reality.

Minhyuk was still inside his capsule trying hard to reconnect to the game.

[Your psychological state is unstable.]

[You will not be able to connect.]

[It is recommended that you take a good rest before logging back in the game.]

Even after trying hundreds of times, Minhyuk still failed to log back in.

'Being able to connect earlier was only thanks to a sudden stroke of luck...'

Athenae was a game that was famous for being a game that had no errors and bugs. However, although very, very rarely, there were cases where their players would experience connection

errors. It was extremely rare, but a player that was not allowed to access the games due to physical constraints would be able to succeed in logging in after trying to log in for hundreds of times.

And Minhyuk was able to grab that very slim chance by sheer luck. Even so, the Athenae equipment immediately noticed his abnormal state and stopped his normal gameplay, only allowing him a brief amount of time inside the game.

[Your access to the game has been forced through an abnormal method.]

[Your psychological state is unstable.]

[You will be forced to log out in three minutes. We recommend that you log out in a safe place.]

Minhyuk tried to access the game again and again after he was logged out by the system. But after experiencing failure time and time again, Minhyuk eventually gave up and came out of the capsule.

'It's better to get a good rest before logging back inside.'

First, he decided to have a meal and calm his dizzy head to some extent. He sat in front of the TV and watched the members of Let's Eat Sect eat his food in a hurry.

'I'm glad they all found my dishes to be delicious.'

Minhyuk smiled lightly. Of course, the dishes that Minhyuk made with all his might were packed with power too.

A few months before.

Minhyuk had started preparing for war.

Minhyuk, who holed himself up inside the lord's mansion's private kitchen, had told Haze that he should not be disturbed if there was nothing special to report. He then looked at the memo that he had written. He used his 'Create a Recipe' skill and discovered the dishes that the NPCs and the members of Let's Eat Sect wanted to eat. This memo was filled with those recipes that he had written.

The number of dishes that Minhyuk had listed reached a staggering amount. But he never thought that it was a 'chore'. In fact, he even thought of it as a 'reward'. The first thing that came to mind when he started making the dishes was, *'Thank you, everyone.'*

Losing weight, adapting to *Athenae*, and becoming the object of everyone's admiration were things that he accomplished with the help of everyone. It was only possible because everyone helped him and stayed together with him. For Minhyuk, who had closed himself off from the world for several years, their existence had become special to him. They were like a family, sometimes like a friend, other times like a father and a mother to him. Their presence and kindness filled the hole in his empty heart.

'I hope that you will feel happy when you eat this dish.'

Everyone was special to him. Conir, a boy who wanted to become the Ramyeon God, was like a brother to him. Ghost Spear Ben, the man that made coffee while combing his luscious hair, was like his father. Vice Guild Master Genie was a close friend and a reliable helper that always gave him advice on guild management. Locke, who was ugly but had a heart that was warmer than

anybody else, had always been sincere to him and he had always been grateful for that. It was not only them, there were countless people that were special to him.

'Let's start.'

Minhyuk rolled his sleeves up as he turned towards the hundreds of rare ingredients from all over the world piled up like a mountain to the side.

The first dish that he had made was for Death.

'Thank you for changing yourself.'

Death might not be a member of Let's Eat Sect, but he was a friend that Minhyuk wanted to treat to a delicious meal at least once. The food that Death wanted to eat as per the 'Create a Recipe' skill was none other than a 'homemade dish'.

He had lived alone for a long time and had long been accustomed to eating instant food and delivery just like any single man living alone. And it seemed like he did not cook in the game either, since his DEX was pitifully small. Just like any typical single man living alone, Death seemed to crave for some boiling soybean stew and grilled mackerel, the typical homemade dishes.

Minhyuk, with a wide smile on his face, started to cook. He added a lot of tofu in the boiling soybean stew before tasting the flavor. Then, he grilled the mackerel, made some seasoned spinach and bean sprouts, some sweet and salty soybeans, green onion kimchi and many other side dishes.

'You're going to eat this in a hurry, huh?'

A smile immediately curled at the corners of Minhyuk's mouth. Minhyuk was cooking for others, and not for himself. This was indeed a tremendous improvement on his part and could be viewed as a great progress in his eating addiction treatment.

The highlight of the special ability and effects of Death's dish was the ability to further strengthen the undead. When he finally finished the dish...

[You have completed Homemade Dishes.]

[Death's dish is the only dish with the buff effect.]

[The Create a Recipe Skill Effect can only be tasted by the same person once per month.]

[Trance. It's a dish that has your 'heart', 'joy' and 'effort for others' poured into it.]

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[You have gained 30 DEX.]

[You have gained 200 REP.]

[You have gained 5,000 AP.]

The fact that the first dish that he cooked was a legendary grade dish made Minhyuk extremely delighted. He did not stop there. This time, he prepared a 'Bizarre Rice Cake' set for Ascar.

'She's always been quiet, but she always steps forward for the guild.'

To Minhyuk, Ascar looked aloof and cold but he knew that she was a warm-hearted person. Minhyuk sincerely hoped that her stress would be blown away once she ate this Bizarre Rice Cake set. He felt happy. Just as he felt delighted when he made Death's dish, he also felt happy when he cooked a dish for Ascar too. And when he finished it...

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

'Two legendary grade dishes in a row?'

Minhyuk smiled. This was a very rare occurrence, nevertheless, he was still happy. This time, the dish that he was making was for Genie. What Genie wanted was a savory carbonara, a dish perfect with crispy pickles.

'The rascal has lost a lot of weight.'

He smiled when he thought about how Genie had become very pretty, completely unlike her appearance in the past. Minhyuk was still grinning when he finished the dish.

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

"..."

Instead of a smile, cold sweat started to drip down Minhyuk's forehead.

'Why did I suddenly become so lucky...?'

Nevertheless, Minhyuk still continued to cook dishes. And his fourth dish...

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

"Uh, uhmm..."

Minhyuk could not help but feel nervous when things went well for him. And when he finished his fifth dish, he received a totally unexpected set of notifications.

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[You have made five legendary grade dishes in a row.]

[You have gained 500 additional REP.]

[You have gained 30 additional points to all your five basic stats.]

[The God of Cooking is in awe after watching you make five legendary grade dishes in a row.]

[The God of Cooking is the Food God's master. Now, he has started watching you, the Food God's descendant, closely.]

Ring!

[The God of Cooking is suggesting a bet. The God of Cooking is challenging you to make ten legendary grade dishes.]

“...?!”

They were truly shocking and unexpected notifications.

Chapter 446: The Absolute God's Secret

The Food God was someone that ate a lot. Simply put, the Food God's class was just a tad bit different from a chef. However, the cooking skill that the Food God had inherited was amazing enough that it could ignore the skills of the secret classes, hidden classes, and legendary classes.

And the source of this shocking cooking skill, a point of doubt for Minhyuk for the longest time, was finally somewhat revealed. It was basically not from the Food God but from the 'God of Cooking', the Food God's master. But the strangest part was...

[The God of Cooking is suggesting a bet. The God of Cooking is challenging you to make ten legendary grade dishes.]

...the God of Cooking suggested a bet and challenged Minhyuk to make ten legendary grade dishes. The fact that a God made a bet with him was already amazing in and of itself. However, the conditions were ridiculous. The God challenged him into making ten legendary grade dishes.

'Can I even do that?'

Of course, Minhyuk had already made five legendary grade dishes in a row. But that was a feat with lower chances than those of winning the lotto. In short, it was all thanks to his sudden stroke of luck. The greatest problem here was that he needed to make five more. After a moment of contemplation, he thought that this was something that would not hurt him even if he tried.

'Besides, my cooking skills might get stronger with this bet.'

After all, this was a bet with the God of Cooking, the very same god that taught the Food God. He definitely had the power and skill to create better dishes. The first thing that Minhyuk did was to check the quest window.

'Absolute God??' Minhyuk thought in doubt after hearing an unfamiliar word. What kind of being was an Absolute God? For now, he still did not know.

'But there are a lot of penalties...'

In other words, the five legendary grade dishes that he had completed and was very delighted with, would disappear and be taken away. Just thinking about them was enough to make him happy.

'Should I challenge it? Or not?'

He would feel heartbroken if these dishes that he made for his friends were suddenly taken away in vain. However, his curiosity towards the rewards marked as '???' was too much for him to not

challenge it. Also, this might be the chance for him to increase his own power. After thinking for a long time, Minhyuk finally made up his mind. He said, "I accept the bet."

Minhyuk suppressed his emotions and tried to be as rational as possible. These dishes were dishes that he made for his friends and not for himself. They were something that none of them asked for and were just things that Minhyuk made on his own. Since they were unaware of it, none of them would be hoping for something. If he told them that he 'rejected' this, none of them would nod and agree with him. In fact, they might probably even tell him that he made the wrong decision here.

After all, this was a quest that would present a new path for Minhyuk. And...

'Even if I fail, I'll just have to do my best to cook for them again.'

...he could cook for them anytime he wanted.

'I don't need to make five of them in a row. I have a time limit of three weeks to make them.'

The truth was, the three-week time limit, for people other than Minhyuk, to create five legendary grade dishes was something completely absurd. Legendary artifacts and legendary grade dishes had started to frequent the market as the players started to play longer. However, they were like 'poison' to common rankers, with their difficulty level to produce.

In fact, producing a legendary grade dish within three weeks was something that Minhyuk was not even sure was possible for him, what more if it was five?

'It must either be luck, or maybe there's some other reason.'

But even if he did not rely on luck in the future, it was alright. Minhyuk would not give up on the five legendary grade dishes and he would definitely be able to surprise the God of Cooking. In the first place, he was not a genius, he was 'someone that worked hard'.

With firm determination, Minhyuk started cooking once again. This time, it was a dish for Lucia. She was the Assassin of the Moon and had become the master of her own guild. Together with her guild members, she joined Let's Eat Sect and declared that they were the guild's 'shadows'. He was also very thankful to her. And the dish that he was making for her was none other than the Korean thistle rice meal.

'She always kept on saying that she wanted to eat ramyeon every day. This time, she should eat healthy food.'

To Minhyuk, Lucia seemed like a person that liked ramyeon. She used to tell him, 'Do you want to eat ramyeon in my house?'

Every time Minhyuk received this message, he would always look at it in doubt.

'Does she only ever eat ramyeon three times a day?'

Of course, for Minhyuk, ramyeon was the best food. But asking, 'Do you want to eat ramyeon?'' everyday was still a bit too much for him.

'Do you want to eat chicken at my house?'

'Do you want to eat some homemade meals at my house?'

'Do you want to eat pizza at my house?'

She could ask him these, so why did she have to ask if he wanted to eat ramyeon everyday?!

'I'll definitely make you some delicious Korean thistle rice that is both delicious and good for your health!'

Korean thistle rice was both good for the palate and the health. It was best paired with warm dried radish green soybean soup or cheonggukjang. Minhyuk felt a bit better when he thought about Lucia, who only thought about eating ramyeon every day, eating this Korean thistle rice and regaining her energy. And that was how he started cooking.

Minhyuk's hands moved lightly as he cooked. He sincerely hoped that Lucia would feel that eating rice was better and healthier than eating ramyeon every day. He placed the Korean thistle rice in a regular pressure cooker, not the electric rice cooker. The cheonggukjang was also boiling and emitting a tantalizing scent and filled with healthy chunks of tofu and unflavored dried laver. Minhyuk also mixed some soybean paste and soy sauce, to make the seasoning that he would use to mix with the Korean thistle rice.

After thinking about how Lucia liked stimulating things, he also made some spicy stir-fried pork for her. He felt happy just by making it.

'I won't eat ramyeon everyday anymore, Minhyuk!'

A wide smile curled at the corners of Minhyuk's lips when he thought about how Lucia would choose to become healthy after eating the Korean thistle rice that he made for her.

Minhyuk must have already been tired after making his sixth dish in a row. But he had forgotten about his exhaustion and completely fell into a trance as he continued to cook. And when he finished the dish...

[You have completed a Korean Thistle Rice.]

[Rare Grade.]

Unfortunately, a lower-grade dish appeared the moment he accepted the bet.

"Ah, man. What do I do if she feels sad about this?"

Minhyuk thought that he should make another Korean thistle rice meal. However, even though his words sounded like it was filled with disappointment, his mouth was twitching with joy.

There was one thing that the God of Cooking did not know. Minhyuk felt disappointed when legendary grade dishes came out. This was because he had already decided that he would eat all of the dishes that came out with a grade lower than unique.

However, the dishes that he made earlier always came out as legendary, legendary, legendary! A series of regrets appeared one after another! This time, he could finally eat! With an expression that screamed 'it can't be helped', Minhyuk happily helped himself to some Korean thistle rice, before cooking once again.

Despite the grueling work, he did not feel exhausted. He enjoyed cooking for his friends to the point that he even forgot the bet that he made with the God of Cooking. Besides, even if he failed, he would still be delighted since he would eat these failed dishes.

A day, two days, three days, four days, a week then passed, but no legendary grade dish had appeared. Minhyuk had reached the point where he opted not to eat the failed dish right away so he could challenge another dish. He kept on cooking and changing things up.

Although he did not achieve any legendary-grade dish during that week, he still showed his unwavering will. He slept as little as he could and immediately started cooking the moment he logged back inside the game.

Of course, he was only just a human being, so doing this was hard on him. Every once in a while, he would feel his vision turn blurry and his body start to feel heavy to the point that he wanted to sink and collapse on the ground from exhaustion.

Whenever that happened, he would get these notifications:

[You have triggered the Skill: Will.]

[All of your stats, skills and abilities including DEX will temporarily increase by 24%.]

His skill Will would relieve him of his exhaustion for a moment. And...

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[Your skill proficiency in the Food God's Cooking Skill has increased.]

Thanks to his repetitive cooking, his Food God's Cooking skill proficiency and his DEX were steadily increasing. In his trance-like state, the seventeenth day had passed by unknowingly. So far, he was only able to make one legendary dish.

The world above the clouds. It could be simply put that way. The ground was made up entirely of clouds, and even though the place was bright, there was no sun. In this world, one man was looking down through the clouds.

'Amazing,' A sigh of admiration unknowingly escaped the man's mouth.

How many days has it been since the person started cooking? The person that he had been watching was genuinely happy as he cooked and cooked for others. But the more surprising part was...

'Isn't he the Food God's descendant?'

The Food God was literally someone that loved to eat more than anyone else. But that God's descendant was now doing his best for others, that he even ignored his exhaustion and fatigue. Even when the man had reached that point where his exhaustion was going to get the best of him, he would stand up firmly and express his firm determination to finish what he started.

At first, he was just interested in him and had suggested the bet for fun. However, there were only four days left and the man was only able to make one legendary grade dish so far. The God of Cooking thought, *'It would be nice if he can get my secret...'*

However, if the man lost the bet, then he would not be able to get it.

There were only four days left until the end of the bet. If others were in Minhyuk's shoes right now, they would most definitely be extremely tense and nervous and would have already resorted to cursing Joy Co. Ltd. and shouting about how *Athenae*? was a 'freaking shitty game'.

However, Minhyuk was still smiling.

'I have no regrets.'

Of course, Minhyuk was still human, so he would still feel disappointed if he failed in the end. However, even if that happened, he would not regret it since he gave it his all. If he did his best and it still did not work, then it was no longer his fault. So, he still continued to cook happily. Just like that another one, two days had gone by.

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

The continuous notification about his DEX increase also helped him to not succumb to his exhaustion. He was able to accumulate 60 DEX points within the three-week time limit set for the bet. And finally, the last day came. Thankfully, he did not have any shadow of regret on his face.

'Our dear Jisoo.'

His game nickname was Locke. What Minhyuk was trying to make for him was some rice cake dumpling soup. He had already prepared the beef bone broth a long time ago and with that as the base, he added some rice cakes and dumplings and boiled them for a while, before adding some egg and seaweed powder for garnish.

'If you scoop up some hot dumplings with your spoon and put it in your mouth together with some crispy kimchi then...'

Minhyuk was sure that Locke would exclaim in delight. Just imagining how Locke would like it and how he would be happy when he received this dish was enough to bring his spirits up. Even the fact that there was only a day left for the bet was not enough to dampen his mood.

When he sprinkled the sliced green onion on top of the soup, the notifications came.

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[This is your seventh Legendary Grade Dish.]

"Oh."

A deep smile curled at the corner of Minhyuk's mouth. His butt even started to jiggle unknowingly from the happiness of getting a legendary grade for Locke's dish.

This time, he was making a dish for Grandpa Ben. Minhyuk wanted to give Grandpa Ben a taste of the dishes from their world, and not from Athenae. So, he prepared a homemade burger set for him. He could already imagine Grandpa Ben telling him this while eating the dish, '*Hoho. My son... no, my lord. I feel like the food you make is giving me more strength.*'

Minhyuk could not help but grin at the thought of Grandpa Ben smiling happily, while eating the dish he made for him.

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[This is your eighth Legendary Grade Dish.]

He had achieved another unbelievable feat. Next, he made a dish for Khan. He was Minhyuk's close friend who liked to use his fists and never skipped exercising in reality. A real friend that he could talk anything and everything with.

Minhyuk was going to make some braised spicy chicken for him. He was sure that Khan would definitely give him the thumbs up when he mashed the potatoes with the braised spicy chicken's sauce and mixed it with rice. When that time came, Minhyuk would ask him, '*Is it good?*' and Khan would give him a happy smile in answer. And when he finished the dish...

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[This is your ninth Legendary Grade Dish.]

Surprisingly enough, Minhyuk failed to notice the series of notifications that rang for him. It was because he had already fallen into a deep trance, and started on his next dish.

This time, he was making a dish for the Best Selling Author Aruvel. Whenever Aruvel was writing his work, he would concentrate deeply and fail to realize that the day had already turned into night. He always worked so hard that he would even get nosebleeds.

For this hardworking Aruvel, Minhyuk wanted to present some Chinese food so he could realize and learn about the flavor of the best food in the foreigners' world. Minhyuk made some dry black bean noodles, sweet and sour pork, and fried dumplings. He could already imagine Aruvel, who dipped the fried dumplings in the dry black bean noodles' sauce, saying, '*Fried dumplings... Woah, I feel like I can write more with this!*'

Just the thought of Aruvel eating the dish that he made happily was enough to make him happy. If it was for them, Minhyuk would willingly face any hardships. After he finished the dish, a bright light shone and covered his entire body. Then, a strange, mysterious and old, decrepit book descended from the skies which was immediately followed by a series of notifications.

[You have made ten Legendary Grade Dishes.]

[The God of Cooking was deeply impressed by your firm will and determination. You did not even succumb to your exhaustion when cooking for others. He is giving you additional rewards.]

[The ten legendary grade dishes that you have made will have stronger buff effects and special abilities.]

[All of the legendary grade dishes that you will make in the next month will have stronger buff effects.]

[Your chances of creating legendary grade dishes in the next month will double.]

The ten legendary grade dishes that he made would have stronger effects? This was something that was already completely incomprehensible but the notifications were not over yet. The descending old book stopped in front of Minhyuk and...

[One of the Absolute God's Ten Secrets has awakened in the world.]

[You have gained the Active Skill: Overlapping Delight.]

Chapter 447: The Absolute God's Secret

Minhyuk was unfamiliar with the word 'Absolute God'. There was a chance that other players might know about this term, but Minhyuk? He was completely clueless. He also did not have a single clue about the God of Cooking being one of the Absolute Gods, nor any knowledge about the Absolute God's Ten Secrets.

'But I'm sure that it's something great.'

The God of Cooking was the Food God's master, which meant that there was a high chance that the Food God was not in the ranks of these 'Absolute Gods'. As for the Absolute God's Secrets, rather, the one that he acquired...

'The process of acquiring this secret is completely absurd.'

...Minhyuk was sure that the other players that had acquired the 'Absolute God's Secrets' would definitely have undergone harsh requirements and ridiculous trials, just like what he had experienced. After all, the rewards would definitely be proportional to the amount of effort they gave for the task and the things that they did.

Minhyuk immediately checked the Absolute God's Secret, the Overlapping Delight.

Absolute God's Secret

? You can overlap the buff effects of two different dishes.?

? Once the buff effects of two different dishes overlap, you will be able to see the effect of the overlapping dishes even if you consumed one food and thought of 'consuming' another.?

? A 'cooking dice' will be thrown when the two dishes' buff effects overlap. The number that will be displayed on the dice will determine the duration of the buff.?

? The lower the number, the shorter the duration of the buff effect. The duration per number rolled is as follows: thirty seconds for number 1, one minute for number 2, two minutes for number 3, three minutes for number 4, four minutes for number 5 and seven minutes for number 6.?

? The EXP that you can obtain will double for as long as the special effect of the Overlapping Delight is in effect.

“...!”

The Absolute God’s Secret was far more powerful than what Minhyuk had expected.

Genie and the members of Let’s Eat Sect were all in a desperate situation. When they were still Legend Guild, Minhyuk had started to bring one vassal after another. Each of these vassals had their own distinct personalities, but they had always been the strongest and most reliable backers of the guild, even after they had been reborn as the Let’s Eat Sect. The guild members wanted to protect them as much as they could, but they were completely hopeless in their current situation.

Ghost Spear Ben was suffering from severe injuries and had collapsed while vomiting a mouthful of blood. Best Seller Author Aruvel had his left arm broken and was only swinging his spear with his right arm. Ramyeon Boy Conir had used countless swords from the enemies that he had cut down and had broken them over and over again. Although he kept on taking the swords of the enemies that he had slain to protect his dearly beloved hyung’s territory, he had already reached the limits of his body. Paladin Corr was no different.

More than 100,000 troops flocked to Valhalla, while the Pinnacle Strong Men, who were hiding among their midst, kept on attacking the NPCs. To the Let’s Eat members, they had to protect and save the NPCs. However, they became aware of the bitter fact that they were just ‘one player’. They were their country’s strongest mage, strongest knight, strongest spearman, and strongest tamer fighting against 100,000 people. Although they even used their bodies to protect the NPCs, one of the Pinnacle Strong Men was able to get past their defenses and had tried to behead Ghost Spear Ben’s head.

“Noooooooooooo!!!”

“Kyaaaaaaaaack! No. Grandpa Ben!!! Quick, run away! Run away!”

“Please! I beg you, please!!!”

Both the soldiers and the members of Let’s Eat Sect screamed. Ben was one of the pillars of the guild and was a precious person that Minhyuk cherished dearly. Then, at that moment, an arrow struck Loki’s sword. The miracle that Minhyuk had created finally came. And it was nothing short of spectacular.

“Master!”

“Lord Legend!!!”

The spearmen created a defensive circle to protect Ghost Spear Ben and their guild. All of the members of Let’s Eat Sect breathed a sigh of relief, but deep inside, they were all frustrated.

‘We couldn’t do anything.’

'The best guild is like this...'

'I almost failed to protect our most precious people.'

'We're still very much lacking.'

They could only blame themselves.

'If only I were a bit stronger. If only I had the power to go beyond my limits now. Then, we may not have collapsed so helplessly like this.'

Then, 'he' appeared.

"We don't have much time. Come and get your food, quick. This is for Grandpa Ben, for Genie, for Locke..."

He did not explain why he was late and only moved hurriedly as if he was being chased by something.

"What do you mean by that? Why don't we have much time? You're already here, so why..." Genie asked in doubt.

Unfortunately, Minhyuk only spoke after handing over all of the food to them, "These are the dishes that I made for you in the past few months. Thank you for doing your best to fight while I was away. Please continue to do so."

Minhyuk looked at them in guilt. However, he immediately chewed and swallowed the 'Almond of Subordinates' and summoned the Let's Eat Sect's Sword and Shield. Then, he looked back at his guild members and said, "I hope that you'll find the dishes enjoyable and delicious."

With a bitter smile on his face, he logged out and disappeared from their sights. Everyone could not understand the situation. But then, Black Dragon squeezed through the gap and entered the spearmen's defensive circle to explain everything quickly. Genie, the guild members and even the NPCs were all left speechless after they heard his words.

'He did that for months just for us...'

'Not only did he engage in diplomatic activities, he was also busy with guild management, yet he still cooked for us...'

'Thank you, Minhyuk.'

Everyone was speechless. They were fully aware that Minhyuk had been pushing himself too hard these past few months. But they thought that since they were all rankers, they had to focus on the development of their territories. They thought that they had tried their hardest, but they could not even compare to Minhyuk's efforts. It was no wonder that he was left unconscious for days. They felt something warm gush and cover their hearts.

"Hohoho. My son... no, my lord. The food that he makes always looks delicious."

Ghost Spear Ben almost got killed earlier, but he was chuckling at the dish that Minhyuk had handed over to him. But if one looked closely, they would be able to see the tears that were misting Ghost Spear Ben's eyes.

Genie, who was looking at the 'carbonara' placed in front of her, had unknowingly shed a tear.

"I was just getting a bit peckish. Come to think of it, we haven't eaten properly these days, right?" She said as she hurriedly wiped the tears off of her face.

"*Sniff, sniff, sniff.* Minhyuk, you rascal. You should have taken it a bit easier? You should have taken some rest!" Locke shouted, snot already dripping from his nose. He was someone that could not hide his feelings well, so he was already crying as he looked at the rice cake dumpling soup placed in front of him.

"...Let's eat," Ascar, who was lying on the ground with both of her legs broken, said with a slight smile.

That was right. They had to eat now. These were the precious dishes that Minhyuk made for them. But there was something that they needed to do first before they could do that. And that was none other than checking the 'dish effects'. Of course, it would not matter to them if the effects were not that good. After all, these dishes were something precious that Minhyuk had made for them.

'Hoho. Shall I look at the effects of the dish that my lord has made for me?'

The dish that Minhyuk made for Ben was none other than a homemade burger set meal. The words 'Grandpa Ben' were carefully written on the paper that wrapped the burger. Just one look and Ben could tell that Minhyuk wanted him to taste the food in the foreigner's world. Ben immediately checked the details of the homemade burger set meal.

? All stats will increase by 25%.

? Your spear's basic attack will increase by 250%.

? Ghost Spearmanship's MP consumption and skill cooldown will decrease by 30%.

? Ghost Spearmanship's attack will increase by 30%.

? You can use Absolute Pinnacle Spear twice without incurring any penalties.

? Upon consumption, you will recover 100% of your HP, MP, and release all of your abnormal states.

? Upon consumption, the effect that's best suited for your needs will be activated for an hour.

"...?!"

Ghost Spear Ben choked on his spit when he saw the dish's description.

'Ho... how...'

This dish was not just unusual. It was beyond that. The dish could increase all of his stats by 25% and increase his spear's basic attack by 250%? With this much, he would be able to pierce through several knights with just one attack. But was that all? Of course not.

'I can use Absolute Pinnacle Spear twice without incurring any penalties...?'

The Absolute Pinnacle Spear, the spear's pinnacle skill, was precisely the one that Ghost Spear Ben had used when they hunted Vormon in the past. The power that this Absolute Pinnacle Spear possessed was so amazing that it was said that it could even pierce through the gods. It was proven when he was able to knock down Black Dragon Vormon in the past. However, the skill had an absolutely devastating penalty.

*'If you use the Absolute Pinnacle Spear, then you will die,?'*The 'God of Spearmanship' warned Ghost Spear Ben when he created the Absolute Pinnacle Spear. This was because this was a power that no human should have been able to make. On top of that, the power that it had was far beyond what Ben could control. The Absolute Pinnacle Spear was a skill that required the consumption of the user's entire HP and MP before it could be used.

But, he was now allowed to use it twice without incurring that penalty. And that was not all.

"Heooooooooook?!"

"This, this... what the hell?! Is this even possible?!"

"Crazy...!"

"...This is the best."

Minhyuk had brought them more than twenty dishes. Most of these dishes were legendary grade dishes. On the occasion that they did not get that grade, the effects of the dish that were given to them was still enough to shock them to the core.

Ghost Spear Ben, who thought about Minhyuk fondly, knew that the only way that he could repay him was to enjoy the dish that he gave him. So, Ben started to eat. The first thing he did was to peel off the paper wrapper and examine the homemade burger.

'Oho? So, this is that kind of food?'

Sandwiched between two breads were a fried egg, two slices of ham, melted cheese, lettuce, pickles, and a golden, well-grilled beef patty. There was also this sweet and spicy sauce that dripped between the buns.

'The smell is making my mouth water.'

Ghost Spear Ben's appetite was completely stimulated from the enticing scent that was coming out of the homemade burger in his hands. For a moment, he forgot about his age as he opened his mouth wide and chomped down on the burger. Then, he closed his eyes and slowly savored the

flavor. The various ingredients sandwiched in the burger created a great harmony with the sweet and spicy sauce. It even had plenty of vegetables in it.

Crunch, crunch—

The contrast of the chewy and crunchy textures of the ingredients were like art in itself. The best part?

‘The patty is melting in my mouth.’

The smile on Ghost Spear Ben never left. This time, he picked up the cola and took a sip.

“Ho? I feel like the greasiness in my mouth is being washed away.”

Then, a faint tingling sensation suddenly appeared at the back of his throat. The feeling was foreign to him, but it was not bad, rather, it felt pleasant and thrilling. After that, he grabbed one of the thick fries and placed it in his mouth.

Crunch, crunch—

“I really like these hot and salty things.”

This time, he dipped the fries in the sweet and sour ketchup before placing it in his mouth. The tangy flavor of the ketchup went perfectly well with the fries, that Ben felt like it was the icing on the cake.

“Ho~” Ben let out a burst of admiration as he looked at the people around him.

Chomp, chomp, chomp, chomp, chomp—

Chew, chew, chew, chew, chew—

Slurp, slurp, slurp, slurp—

Each and every single one of them were scrambling for the food in front of them, just like how Ghost Spear Ben was earlier.

The commentators could not help but sigh as they watched the members of Let’s Eat Sect wolf down their food, despite being in the most critical juncture of the war that would determine their fate.

[Ah... they’re really only eating.]

[Is the food really more important than the war right now?]

[I know that Player Minhyuk’s dishes are really outstanding and amazing. But even so...]

Of course, they were all aware about the buff effects of Minhyuk’s dishes. However, they still could not help but wonder if those effects were enough for them to get out of this desperate situation that they were in.

If that was not the case, it would be better for them to join hands with the two men that were stopping the Barras Kingdom’s troops right away. But then, at that moment...

[Huh, huuuuuuuuuuuuuh?! What, what the hell?! A golden light suddenly appeared and engulfed the members of Let's Eat Sect that are being protected by the unknown spearmen!!!]

The commentators and viewers alike looked at the scene in both shock and doubt, after seeing a bright golden light flashing brightly. The spearmen walked out one after another to open the path for the man that was emitting this bright golden glow. This man was none other than Ghost Spear Ben.

His usual black hair and eyes had completely turned white. He might have grown old, but his huge physique and even his mysterious and charming appearance that could make any woman cry out in admiration during his prime were all carefully maintained. Then, Ghost Spear Ben said, "Absolute Pinnacle Spear."

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A huge force wrapped around the spear that he was holding in his hands.

[Just, just now... wasn't Ghost Spear Ben about to die?]

[Now that I looked closely, it seems like he has completely recovered. There were no traces of injuries on his body!]

Ghost Spear Ben leapt up to the sky as a bright white light burst out of his spear and illuminated the battlefield that was covered in a thick cloud of despair.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The enemy troops perished and disappeared into nothingness whenever he passed by. The number that disappeared from his attack reached 3,000, a number that did not lose to Elpis and Brod's attacks.

[Heooooook?!]

[That's, that's completely ridiculous...!]

[C, crazy...]

[But Ghost Spear Ben immediately disappeared when he used that power during Black Dragon Vormon's raid.]

[Perhaps Ghost Spear Ben has sacrificed himself for Let's Eat Sect.]

Everyone thought so.

But then, something more shocking happened. More than ten of Let's Eat Sect's members and NPCs were engulfed in a golden aura, a signal that indicated that they had used the skills that they dared not use before, because of the severe penalties that they would incur. In this dark and dreary battlefield, they were the only ones that were exuding this bright and golden aura. They were the only ones that looked noble, aloof, and outstanding.

At the same time, Ghost Spear Ben, who everyone thought was already going to die, once again leapt to the skies, as his spear emitted another blinding white light. He said, "Absolute Pinnacle Spear."

[...?!]

[...?!]

[...?!]

His powerful spear made another appearance, shaking the entire world once again.

Chapter 448: For Elpis

Demon World.

[How dare that puny human!!!]

Puhaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The infuriated Verus was venting out his anger and was releasing his wrath on the entire Demon World, bringing it into shambles. Every single demon, even the 72 Devils lined up in front of him, did not dare to take a single breath.

Great Demon Verus was known as the greatest and most terrifying demon among the three great demons. This was because he had the authority to lead the 72 Devils. The 72 Devils were all absolute beings that could easily overpower the dragons on earth. But even these absolute beings were unable to raise their heads in the face of Great Demon Verus' wrath. And the reason why he was angry was...

[Diablo, you... how dare you...!]

...because of Diablo. Diablo used to be nothing more than a vessel, a bowl for the great demons' demonic energy. However, he did not grow crazy despite the huge amount of demonic energy, and even honed his swordsmanship as he declared that he would hunt the demons. To Verus, this was just some sort of 'amusement'. He sneered as he watched him grow terrifyingly fast. He, a human being, had grown strong enough to fight against the demons easily. And the more he grew, the greater and stronger the trials Verus gave to him, the more Diablo grew angrier at the said demon. In the end, Diablo was thrown into a frenzied state.

Back then, Verus thought, '*A frenzied Diablo will be much easier for me to get.*'

Verus coveted Diablo. He wanted to keep him in the palms of his hands. But one day, an unknown man suddenly released him from his frenzied state, with nothing but simple and measly human food at that! But was that all? Diablo even knelt before that man and made an eternal vow, something that Diablo did not do towards Verus.

[How dare you!!!!]

Puhaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Terrifying black flames bursted out all over the place, showing the Great Demon Verus' wrath.

[I'll go there by myself!!!]

At that, Baal, one of the 72 Devils, expressed his concerns.

[But right now, we don't have the power to make the Great Demons descend, right?]

The demons and the great demons were separated from the earth and the heavens. This was because they found their existence unpleasant. But the main reason why they could not freely move to the

other worlds was because of the gods that were controlling them. But there was still a method available for them to descend.

[I will descend using the Letter of Disaster.]

[...!]

[...!]

[...!]

Everyone present was horrified by his declaration. The Letter of Disaster was a special parchment that could allow a greater being to temporarily descend. However, there was one big problem.

[But if you use the Letter of Disaster to descend to the middle world and end up incurring physical damage to your body, you might get sealed.]

That was right. Sealed. The Great Demon Verus would be sealed. Of course, even if he was sealed, it would not be for a long time.

But Verus just laughed mockingly at their words.

[Do you think they can seal me?]

His words made the demons present remember that the enemies that the Great Demon Verus would face were nothing but puny humans.

So, with that said, Great Demon Verus would proceed with his plans to use the Letter of Disaster to descend. However, as a form of restriction, Verus' power would be halved. Even so, the might of that was still enough to split the continent easily in two. And right now, he was about to personally descend to the earth to take Diablo away.

Puhaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Ghost Spear Ben once again leapt to the skies. A bright light shone upon the battlefield once more, as another 3,000 enemy troops died without uttering a scream. Ghost Spear Ben, who usually combed his Terrius-like hair, descended upon thousands of enemies, his eyes and hair white. Tens of thousands of soldiers and knights rushed at Ben, who looked as they swung their swords and spears at him.

Stab—

The tip of Ben's spear broke the knights' armor and continued to move forward and break their bones and stab their hearts.

“Im... impossible...!”

Ghost Spear Ben's basic attack had increased by 250%. Even his stats had increased by 25%, which put him at a level above all of the Pinnacle Strong Men present.

[What in the world? I can't understand what's happening.]

[Ghost Spear Ben did not die. He even used his skill with the worst penalty, twice in a row! Even though he almost died earlier, a lot of things changed after he ate that meal. It seems like he got stronger through his stomach, huh?]

When the strong become stronger, it would be different from ordinary people gaining more strength. Right now, Ben has become several times stronger than before. At that moment, another man covered with a bright golden aura stepped out. It was none other than Khan.

Daaaaaash—

Khan, Korea's strongest fighter ranker, also had skills with extreme penalties. This skill was none other than 'Giant's Explosion'. It was a skill that would burn through all of the player's latent HP and MP to strengthen their body. Even if the skill user's MP and HP were at 100%, it would make both stats fall below 5%. After all, it was a skill that has reached the pinnacle. Khan, who was bathed in a golden light, leapt into the skies and caught the attention of everyone present.

“Stop hiiiiiiiiim!!!”

“What the hell?!”

“Aaaaaaaack! Sa... save me!!!”

Screams rang loudly among the enemy troops as the now golden haired and eyed Khan slammed his fists on the ground.

[Giant's Explosion]

[Your fists will gain an additional 1,800% attack the moment it hits your enemies.]

When his first punch landed...

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

...it grew in size until it reached the size of a one-ton truck and slammed on the ground, making dozens of enemy soldiers explode in a rain of blood.

Baaaaaaaaang—

With his second punch, the knights that were able to endure the first blow ended up being crushed to their deaths. And one after the other...

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

Gigantic fists appeared and swept all of the enemies within a thirty-meter radius. But that was not the end of it. Ascar's silver hair, which she had always kept short, grew long enough to reach her waist, making her look more elegant and beautiful. She swung her sword once and...

“Ghostblade's Massacre.”

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

...easily tore apart the flesh hiding underneath the armors of the hundreds of soldiers and knights that were near her.

Fall—

Fall—

Fall—

Fall—

She killed hundreds of enemies in one go. Everyone gaped at the long-haired Ascar in admiration.

There was also Crow. His eyes and hair, which had grown long from his usual cropped-cut style and was fluttering towards the sky, turned red as he threw his spear with all his might.

“Tornado Spear!”

Crackle, crackle, crackle, crackle—

Tornado spears swirled into existence and engulfed the enemies in his vicinity. The tornadoes tore the enemy troops’ flesh and broke their bones, shocking everyone. Even the Pinnacle Strong Men were shocked by their sudden tremendous display of power.

‘What, what kind of...!’

The most flustered among the Pinnacle Strong Men was Loki. At that moment...

Baaaaaaaang—

...Loki flew back from the impact of the attack that aimed for the pit of his stomach, an attack that he blocked with the blade of his sword.

“What the hell?! What kind of power are you using to incur tremendous damage like this!”

The one that appeared in front of Loki was none other than Khan. Khan just chuckled when he heard Loki’s words, “I know, right? It’s like a skill, right? It hurts, right?!”

Although Khan looked no different from his calm and poised self, he was very excited.

“Then, take another hit.”

Flash—

Khan narrowed the distance between them so fast that even Loki could not follow his movements. If it was before, and Loki and Khan were to compete one on one, then the one that would win would definitely be Loki. After all, Loki was the second Pinnacle Strong Man. But when Khan’s swift punch landed on Loki...

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

...his ‘Mythril Sheet Armor’, the armor that has been with him for decades, broke into pieces. That was not all. The punch, packed with tremendous force, broke several of Loki’s ribs.

“Urk...!”

However, Loki thought of this as an opportunity and wondered what kind of power the bastard in front of him was using, *‘What kind of skill is it? I’m sure it’s some kind of body enhancing skill...’*

Otherwise, it would be impossible to produce such power. It was definitely some sort of buff skill! Just when those thoughts flashed in his head, Khan’s kick aimed for his chin.

Thuuuuuud—

Loki's face, which he defended with one arm, turned ugly.

Crack, crack, crack—

This was because his bones cracked from the force of the attack.

'*What the hell...?!?*' Loki thought as Khan continued to send attacks. And with each attack, Loki felt an unbearable pain wrap around his body.

"Keuhaaaaack! Ugh, aaaaaaaack!"

"It hurts, right? Is it painful? Do you think it hurts a lot?!"

"This, this perverted bastard...!"

But Khan just continued to punch and kick him with a pleased smile on his face. That was when Loki thought, '*How can he keep on doing this...?*'

How come the amount of damage that he received was always that high? If it was just an ability to enhance his physical abilities, then it would not be able to last this long. Then, at that moment, a huge flame erupted in Khan's fist.

Crackle—

And when this fist hit Loki...

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

...a huge explosion engulfed his body and tore it to shreds, forcing his HP to plummet in an instant. Only then did Loki realize, "It was, it was just his bare fists...?!"

Loki, who was on the verge of death, saw the grin on Khan's face as he received the final blow to his face. Khan smiled widely as he recalled the grilled eel that Minhyuk made for him.

? STR and AGI will increase by 31%.

? Your fist's basic attack will increase by 350%.

? Giant's related skills' MP consumption will decrease by 40%, while the skill cooldown will decrease by 30%.

? Giant's related skills' attack will increase by 30%.

? You can use Giant's Explosion once without incurring any penalties.

? Upon consumption, you will recover 100% of your HP, MP, and release all of your abnormal states.

? Upon consumption, the effect that's best suited for your needs will be activated for an hour.

Khan trembled when he saw this information. He thought, *'This is crazy... My fist's basic attack can be increased by 350%...?!'*

In fact, even his AGI and STR would also increase by 30%. His fists were literally explosive in terms of power.

Baaaaaaaang—

Every punch that he released killed one knight. Looking around, he realized that the other members of their guild were also in the same situation as him. They only used their basic attacks, but the kingdom troops were not able to deal with them at all.

“How, how can this be...?!” Duke Yverone shouted in disbelief. The king of the elves, the dragon king, and the unknown spearmen were all shocking enough. But now...

'They're only a little more than twenty people...'

...they were sweeping away the Barras Kingdom troops like it was nothing. One swing of their swords, and dozens of people would die. A punch from their fists would kill an elite knight. And when they release their magic, hundreds of their troops would die at the same time. What Yverone was feeling went beyond fear and disbelief. But the more shocking fact was...

'This is unbelievable...'

They were a large army of more than 100,000 strong troops. But now, there were only at most 30,000 of them left. Valhalla was already about to collapse. It was already at arms reach but...!

'We have to save them.'

He had to save the remaining 30,000 troops. Still, even though he thought it, he did not know what he should do to fight against these people who were pushing forward like bulldozers.

[Unbelievable.]

[There are only twenty people putting pressure on the battlefield.]

[With how they are now, I think they can compete with the Summit Five. Perhaps this video will be recorded as the best video of the year.]

Just when the commentators and the viewers were in awe and admiration...

Vwoooooooooooooooooong—

“Retreat!!!”

“Re... retreat!!!”

...a shocking sound rang loudly on the battlefield.

The Barras Kingdom's large army of over 150,000 troops, now with only 30,000 surviving soldiers, were forced to retreat. They abandoned their weapons and even abandoned their comrades to run away and survive.

"Don't give chase to the fleeing soldiers," Genie ordered. Then, all the cameras zoomed in on her face as she uttered the lines that would become the 'best line' in Athenae's history, "I mean, why give chase to those annoying and cheeky f*ckers, right?"

[...]

[...]

[...]

[...]

Over 150,000 troops were only 'cheeky f*ckers' in the eyes of Let's Eat Sect.

Chapter 449: For Elpis

"Retreat! Retreat!!!"

"Quickly! Retreat!!!"

The entire world was left reeling in shock, after watching the surviving 30,000 soldiers of the Barras Kingdom troops run away.

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

The ones that arrived to help Let's Eat Sect all raised their weapons high up in the sky, as they cheered loudly and enthusiastically. Their shouts were a testament to their victory in this ridiculous battle as they watched the enemy troops retreat.

Genie, after declaring a famous line that would leave its mark and remain forever in the history of Athenae, smiled and said, "We will immediately advance towards Barras Kingdom's capital and bring down King Grain."

Thirty thousand men would take a long time to get to Barras Kingdom while retreating. On the contrary, Let's Eat Sect's core force, a grand total of twenty people, would be able to move a lot faster. In other words, they could easily overtake the retreating forces and bring down King Grain and Barras Kingdom's capital faster.

This was it. They were now going to make Minhyuk a king.

'Minhyuk.'

The amazing dishes that he gave them during his brief appearance was something that made all of them, including Genie, feel amazing.

When Genie turned around, she saw Elpis sitting on the ground and looking at the dish that Minhyuk made for him.

Elpis once again took out his earphones and stuck them in his ears to listen to music after the war ended.

“Assa... One... Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly...”

Elpis found the song’s melody to be so beautiful to the point that it made his eyes water. This was the song about the lonely flight of a tiger swallowtail butterfly! Oh, how beautiful the words were! Elpis grinned widely as he listened to his song and looked at the dishes that Minhyuk made for him.

‘Minhyuk... thank you...’

Anyone that saw the wide and brilliant smile on his face would never believe that he was the Lesser Demon of the past.

Elpis heart thumped happily when he saw the dishes that Minhyuk made for him. His smile never left his face as he stared at the garlic bread and soup that he placed in front of him.

Elpis’ family had been poor. As a child, he rarely encountered lavish dishes. But once in a while, his mother would make them some delicious delicacies. And this garlic bread and soup was among them. Elpis felt Minhyuk’s warm sentiments in this dish.

‘Elpis, enjoy your meal.’

Although Minhyuk was not here, Elpis felt like Minhyuk was standing in front of him and saying these words to him. Then, someone sat in front of him and said, “Enjoy this meal. Our lord stayed up for days and did not even get a wink of sleep just to make these for us.”

Elpis looked up, only to see Let’s Eat Sect’s Sword, Brod, who was also preparing to eat the dish that was made for him.

“Let’s... enjoy... the... meal... Sir Brod...”

Brod chuckled at Elpis. They had a long talk, which strengthened their bonds.

Elpis could not hear a sound around him, despite the loud and boisterous cheers that celebrated their victory. He was focused solely on the warm garlic bread and soup in front of him. He grabbed his spoon and took a sip from the spoonful of soup, which immediately caused a rich, creamy, and savory flavor to spread in his mouth. It brought a smile to his face.

‘De... licious...’

This tasted like the dish that his mother made for him. No, in fact, it tasted a lot better than that. Then, Elpis picked up the garlic bread that was sprinkled with parsley powder. Just one look at the warm bread and he could already tell that there would be a ‘*crunch*—’ the moment he bit on it. And just like he expected...

Crunch—

A loud crunch rang from his mouth as he took one, two bites from the bread. The crispy texture and savory flavor of the bread spread in his mouth with every bite, making him smile even wider. This time, Elpis dipped the garlic bread in the soup. The thick and creamy soup covered the garlic bread

and entered his mouth. As he continued to smile in bliss, a notification about a tremendous buff, the same buff that the others had heard, rang loudly in his ears.

After finishing everything and cleaning up, Elpis looked up at the sky with a blissful, content expression on his face. The meadows were green and beautiful as usual and the white clouds continued to float freely in the blue sky, while the birds sang happily. Elpis hoped that this happiness, this joy, would last forever. But someone was trying to take away that happiness from him.

The loud shouts and cheers from Let's Eat Sect rang loudly in the ears of the retreating 30,000 troops. Duke Yverone was still in a state of disbelief. He thought, *'How... How...! A kingdom alone will not be able to destroy a guild like that...!'*

Yverone knew that this was the end of Barras Kingdom. The king that sent troops to the front would definitely be dragged to the ground by his people. Let's Eat Sect would then devour him and create a new kingdom.

'At the very least, I saved 30,000 troops.'

It was his only relief. Duke Yverone was a trashy noble, but he knew that he needed to save the remaining 30,000 troops. He knew that he could not fight a losing battle, especially if he knew that everyone would die here. Saving them was the correct choice of action.

But then, at that moment, a huge shadow was suddenly cast over them.

"...?"

Yverone looked up at the sky in doubt. What he saw made his eyes widen in shock.

"Heooooooooook?!"

This was because two gigantic black arms were floating in the air. The black arms held a huge parchment and...

Riiiiiiip—

...a blazing flame erupted and wrapped around the torn parchment. Then, the black fire directly fell down on the ground.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The troops could not avoid the blazing flames. This was because the fire spread rapidly and devoured the soldiers the moment it fell on the ground.

"Heooooooooook?!" Duke Yverone shrieked as he watched the flames devour the soldiers' flesh and bones, until they turned into ashes. The flames did not stop and eventually reached Duke Yverone and engulfed him.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

His flesh burned and revealed his skeleton, which ended up breaking down into ashes and disappearing in the air. This strange and mysterious disaster engulfed and consumed the 30,000 retreating troops in an instant.

ATV's PD Kim Daeguk felt his heart burn in delight after watching Let's Eat Sect gain victory against the large army that Barras Kingdom sent. However, their happiness did not last for long. The employees that were watching the monitors closely suddenly shrieked.

“What, what the hell is that?!”

“What is that...?!”

PD Kim Daeguk turned around in doubt. He hurried towards the monitor, only to see a huge fire engulfing the retreating 30,000 troops. He would not be surprised if it was simply a huge fire. But this fire, shockingly enough, had engulfed the 30,000 troops and turned them into gray ashes in just three minutes.

Then, they watched as the gigantic black arms twitched. Whatever or whoever it was, they were gigantic. Starting with the black arms that were floating above the ground, his upper body and lower body started to form and take shape.

Finally, his gigantic face appeared. The face looked ugly and rugged, with yellow eyes that looked similar to that of a lizard's, and two huge horns on top of his head. There was also a black cape fluttering on his back. The man stood in the sky and watched the 30,000 troops that disappeared in a blink with an indifferent look on his face.

Not long after, a shocking notification shook the entire continent.

[Great Demon Verus is descending.]

“Great Demon... Verus...?”

With that, the number one search word was soon dominated by Great Demon Verus. And since the notification rang all over the world, broadcasting stations all over the world started broadcasting the scene.

The entire world was in an uproar.

[Great Demon Verus suddenly devoured the retreating 30,000 Barras Kingdom Troops and descended.]

[So far, Great Demon Verus has never shown his true self to the public.]

[Black Dragon Vormon can't even compare with Great Demon Verus. Right now, he's heading towards Let's Eat Sect, who's cheering for their victory.]

Their voices reverberated all over the world. The viewers watching the war between Let's Eat Sect and Barras Kingdom were all mortified.

“The Great Demon... how... how can humans win against that...”

The sudden turn of events flustered and cooled down the excitement that the viewers felt when they watched Let's Eat Sect gain victory. In the end, plenty of people started protesting against Athenae. Since they were players, they knew that a great demon was someone that the current mankind could not fight against.

All of the executives rushed inside one of Joy Co. Ltd.'s meeting rooms. Waiting for them inside was the grim looking President Kang Taehoon.

"President..." Team Leader Park Minggyu called out in a trembling voice.

"You're here. Everyone should calm down," President Kang Taehoon said, but his voice was trembling and weak.

Minhyuk had brought Diablo under his command. Diablo's fate as an integral character was not meant to be written like that. However, one player had changed the NPC's fate and gave him a new lease in life. That resulted in this disaster that was coming straight for Let's Eat Sect.

"Fortunately, Verus descended using the Letter of Disaster."

The Letter of Disaster would halve the power of the person that used the parchment. Even if that was the case, Verus was still ridiculously strong.

"His summon time is one hour. What Verus wants is Diablo and not the destruction of Let's Eat Sect. As long as Diablo goes with Verus, then no disaster would befall them. Verus knows that he shouldn't remain on Earth for too long. Otherwise, he would risk the chance of being sealed."

Everyone nodded at Taehoon's words. This fact brought relief to them. As long as Verus took Diablo back with him, then he would disappear without a care in the world.

But then, Park Minggyu said, "President. That's not Diablo. That's Elpis."

"..."

Kang Taehoon and the executives were all left speechless. They all knew what he 'meant' with those words.

"Wasn't the president happy about it too? No, wasn't everyone here quite happy when it happened?"

It was true. They enjoyed it. They were happy to see the unfortunate artificial intelligence that they had created meet new people and live a new life. They were all very surprised, yet at the same time, they were grateful to Minhyuk for allowing their creation to know what kind of place this virtual reality was like.

Virtual reality, at the heart of it, was all about pioneering ones' self and creating new paths that they could tread on their own. That was right. Kang Taehoon had watched him happily when he saw how Elpis was living a life different from his unlucky life before.

"But now..."

Their best bet was for him to leave. Still, Kang Taehoon couldn't help the selfish thoughts that flashed in his head, *'Don't go with him, Elpis.'*

"We did it! We won!!!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

Let's Eat Sect and their allies jumped in joy.

Elf King Gorn approached the Dragon King and offered a handshake, "Let's forget about the past. Come visit us at Elvenheim."

"That would be good."

Marquis Brad, who was leading the spearmen, stood in front of Ghost Spear Ben.

"Haha~ The brats that I know of are quite useful too, huh?"

"Thank you, master."

Just when they were indulging in their victory, the players around them suddenly froze in place.

[Great Demon Verus is descending.]

Then, their faces hardened imperceptibly. There was no player who did not know of Great Demon Verus. But now, he had descended upon them.

"Well, he can come for all I care."

"Haha. I know, right?"

They all nodded. All they needed to do was to rejoice. They did not need to fear someone that was far away from them. But then, at that moment...

"Huh? Th, that..."

...someone shouted. That was when they saw the huge black figure that was approaching them from the sky above. Only then did they realize what Great Demon Verus came here for.

Elpis trembled when he saw Verus approaching from afar.

'But I'm... happy... now...'

Elpis' pupils shook. Then, the Great Demon Verus snapped his huge fingers...

Thuuuud—

Thuuud—

Thuud—

Thud—

"Keuhaaaaaaack!"

“Keheok!”

“Euaaaaaack!”

...and all of the members and allies of Let's Eat Sect, who were enjoying their victory just a few moments earlier, were forced to kneel down and suffer.

[Great Demon Verus has appeared!]

[The approaching Great Demon Verus' powerful demonic energy has brought terror and fear upon you.]

[You won't be able to control your body from the numbing fear.]

[All stats will decrease by 20%.]

[Your troops' morale has dramatically decreased.]

[Ordinary humans will lose their will to fight in Verus' presence.]

[Verus' demonic energy has restricted the breathing of all the ordinary humans present.]

[Verus' Wrath.]

[You have been subjected to Verus' Wrath. You will not be able to move for three minutes.]

[Everyone will be equal in front of the Great Demon Verus for three whole minutes.]

“Keuhaaaaaaack!”

“Keuhooooook!”

“Euaaaaaack!”

Elf King Gorn, Dragon King, Bard, Ghost Spear Ben and the rest of the troops were forced to kneel on the ground. They could not even move an inch from their position.

“Keuheeeeeeeeeeck!”

“Aaaaaaaaack!”

The soldiers were even bleeding from their mouths and ears. While everyone was incapacitated and could not move, only Elpis stood. He stood idly as he watched the approaching Verus. Then, Verus opened his mouth and said...

[Come with me or I'll kill them all.]

“...”

And Elpis walked, one step at a time, towards Verus.

Chapter 450: For Elpis

The video that showed the advent of the great demon was broadcasted during a time when most people were not free to watch. Even so, the viewership rating of this video far exceeded that of the video of Vormon's hunt. The advent of Great Demon Verus was both a source of terror and shock. Most conversations, no matter where in the world, that talked about this event started with 'Why?'

[Why did he appear? Maybe Verus also does not want to see the creation of a new kingdom? Or maybe the operators manipulated him to do so?]

At first, the opinion of the masses was leaning on this side. But not long after, someone said that this opinion was completely ‘unreasonable’.

[Athenae Management has never changed a scenario that they have made, not even once. It’s clear that Great Demon Verus descended on his own. Also, what do you mean by ‘Verus not wanting to see the creation of a new kingdom’? That’s no different from saying that my Poppy just looked at the sausage that she passed by.]

That was right. It was completely nonsensical. So, they all went back and asked the question again. ‘Why?’.

[Lesser Demon Diablo. He’s a demon but he’s serving a human? There’s no way Verus would just sit back and watch that.]

This anonymous person was very sharp. Lesser Demon Diablo was the Zero Ranked Monster, he fought with a single sword and triumphed against countless demons. His existence in the Demon World was like a myth. Any player that was knowledgeable about the Demon World has encountered at least one story about Diablo.

[Come to think of it, Diablo has always pointed his sword against the demons then swore his eternal allegiance to a human. It’s only natural that Great Demon Verus will be in rage. It’s very likely that Verus descended to take Diablo back.]

[Agree. This is it.]

[This is a fact.]

[Wow. You’re very sharp! Hey, who are you?]

And with this person’s words, the people could tell.

[Then, Diablo only needs to go with Verus?]

[There must be a reason why Great Demon Verus was not able to descend as he pleased. He must have forced his descent. Which means that he would want to avoid a lot of damage. So, if they hand Diablo over, Let’s Eat Sect will be able to avoid a huge disaster.]

Everyone nodded in agreement. Let’s Eat Sect was already on the verge of creating a kingdom. If they did not do that then Great Demon Verus would take them all down, including Valhalla and Atlas, which would spell the end for Let’s Eat Sect and their future.

In the video, Diablo, or Elpis, took a step towards Verus.

Step—

Hell on earth. Pandemonium. That was literally what was happening right now. Plenty of people were vomiting blood or bleeding through their ears and eyes. Some even peed in their pants, while some lost focus in their eyes and even foamed at the mouth. Great Demon Verus’ descent had incapacitated countless soldiers in the field. He only made his appearance, but this simple appearance brought everyone down to their knees.

Elpis turned around and saw another large number of troops coming their way. It was the troops consisting of Lauvredo and the Talmor believers as well as Best Selling Author Aruvel's fans. They numbered around 6,000 and were coming with fierce momentum. However, the moment they arrived on the battlefield, they were all forced to kneel and submit.

"Uuuuuugh!"

"Euaaaaaaack!"

They were quite pitiful. They came only after the war ended and were immediately forced to kneel and scream the moment they saw Great Demon Verus. Elpis, who finally took a step forward, looked around him. The situation was no different for the Elf King, Elf Prince, Dragon King, the spearmen, the members of Let's Eat Sect, and the other NPCs.

'I... have to... go...'

If he did not go, then everyone here would die. He took one step and another towards the Great Demon Verus. The great demon spread his arms wide as he welcomed Elpis.

"Don't go!!! Elpis!!!" But then, a woman's voice rang loudly. This voice was none other than Vice Guild Master Genie's voice. She screamed loudly despite being on her knees. She wanted to get out of this terrible restriction, but she could not do so.

Elpis turned to look at her. Not long after, Centurion Park, who was clutching his chest, shouted, "Please don't go!!! We will fight! Even if we die, we will fight to protect you!!!"

Even Ghost Spear Ben, who was bleeding through his eyes, shouted, "Elpis!!! Are you going to abandon our lord just like that?! Our lord still hasn't given you his orders!!! You swore your eternal allegiance to him, did you not?!!!"

Best Selling Author Aruvel also shouted, "You promised that you will let me write a story about the woman that will fall in love with you in the future! Are you going to go just like that, huh?!!!"

Elpis' indifferent steps stopped. Even the soldiers that were about to collapse and fall used their final strength to shout:

"Lord Shield!!! Please don't go!!!"

"We will fight!!!"

"We will fight for you!!!"

Elpis felt his heart sting. He had only spent little time with them. In fact, it was even them that approached him first.

'Hehe. Boy, do you want to taste a cup of my?luwak?coffee too?' Ghost Spear Ben had asked him with a grandfatherly smile on his face.

'You and your future lover's story! I can already tell that it's going to be a masterpiece!' Aruvel shouted, inspiration blooming as he visited him every day.

Even Genie and the guild members...

‘Elpis, you’re really reliable!’

‘Elpis, you can’t kill me just because I’m ugly, you know?’

‘Elpis, who gave you that MP3?’

‘Elpis!’

‘Elpis~’

‘Elpis!!!’

‘Oiiiiink!’

Elpis was very grateful to everyone. They truly cared for him, a child born to poverty, who was forcibly taken by the demons to become the vessel for their demonic energy and transformed into a lesser demon.

And Great Demon Verus... of course there was no way that he would sit still to watch this heartwarming scene.

[Come to me. If not, then...]

He raised his gigantic hand and flicked his finger.

Thump—

At that moment, a huge fire made of demonic energy burst out in Lauvredo and Best Selling Author Aruvel’s fans’ ranks.

Baaaaaaaang—

The fire made of demonic energy burned down more than 400 people in one go. It was just a flick of his finger, but it eradicated that many of their allies. It was like he was telling them about how much of an absolute being he was.

Step—

Elpis took a step once again. But then, a man, someone other than Elpis, stood silently while looking at him. The man asked, “Are you going?”

[...?!]

Great Demon Verus was in shock. One of the humans that he had restricted stood up in good condition and even dared to look up at him.

Elpis turned to look at the man as the man said, “I won’t stop you. This is your choice, boy. But, let me remind you, our lord still hasn’t given us his orders.”

The man was calm as he judged their situation. He knew that they would be facing a huge risk if they fought against Great Demon Verus here. This might be cruel, but this was the reality. Besides, the lord of Let’s Eat Sect had yet to give them any orders. He had to wait and know if they would keep Elpis, or save Let’s Eat Sect. Right now, the one that was making the wisest judgement was Brod.

Hearing his words, Elpis took another step forward. However, Brod said, "I want you to think about the things that we, you, me and the lord, talked about not too long ago."

"..."

But Elpis still continued to walk forward. Not long after, he stood in front of Great Demon Verus.

[Brat. Swear your eternal allegiance to me.]

His grating whispers were like a scratching record in the ears of those that listened. Then, a bloody parchment suddenly appeared on his stretched out hand.

[That, that parchment!!! That's the Subordination Parchment!]

[The Subordination Parchment is a contract that will make anyone that sign it a 'slave' forever.]

[According to the terms written on that contract, the person that signs this contract must fulfill the orders of the person that they swore allegiance to with all their body, spirit and everything. This literally means that Lesser Demon Diablo, the one that fought against the demons, will become a demon completely under the hands of Verus.]

The bloody parchment floated in front of Elpis.

[Swear your eternal allegiance to me on your knees.]

When Elpis knelt down, everyone was convinced that despair was upon them. Meanwhile, Elpis was recalling the conversation that he and Minhyuk had before.

Elpis felt afraid. He feared that the days of living this happy and peaceful life in this territory, a place that allowed him to smile every day, would someday disappear. He knew for a fact that Great Demon Verus was enraged at what he did. He also knew that the demon would not let him go so easily.

Knowing this, he went to the lord's office. When he arrived, he saw that Brod was already having a conversation with Minhyuk. Even though Brod was there, he said, "I think... it's better... for me... to... leave..."

"Why?" Minhyuk looked at him in doubt. So, Elpis explained the entire story to them.

"I already understand."

Minhyuk was also aware that Elpis was not meant to be here. Great Demon Verus might not really care about the method as long as he could bring Elpis back. But then, he said, "But Elpis, why are you so worried about that?"

"..."

Minhyuk smiled when Elpis looked at him in confusion. So, he said, "You're both my friend and vassal. I will protect you so you don't have to worry about those things."

However, Minhyuk thought that those words weren't enough to dissuade Elpis from leaving. So, he pondered for a moment before continuing, "Even if that happens, don't judge the situation by yourself. Think about how I will judge the situation. So, what if someone would judge your choice? Think about yourself. You should be a bit more selfish. And..."

Minhyuk stood up and approached Elpis. He patted him on his shoulders and said, “Remember the meaning of your name.”

Brod laughed happily when he heard Minhyuk’s words. He also gave his two cents, “Hoho. Elpis. Boy, you’re worrying too much. I’m also a part of this territory, so you shouldn’t worry too much.”

Elpis looked at the pair with an awkward smile on his face.

‘This is the man that I serve. Ah, what a wonderful person. I want to stay with this person forever.’

Elpis, who was on his knees, began to say, “I pledge with my life.”

Screams rang loudly.

“Elpiiiiiiiiis! Don’t do it! Don’t!!!”

“Elpis! I will forever hate you if you continue to recite that pledge!!!”

“Minhyuk hasn’t said anything yet, so why are you making your own decision?!”

All of them screamed. Even the viewers from all over the world lamented these results.

[This shows that us, players, are still infinitely weaker than the great demons.]

[Diablo, the vassal that Player Minhyuk obtained with much difficulty, will be taken away.]

[It’s a pity. But it leaves a more bitter taste in the mouth knowing that this is the only path for Let’s Eat Sect.]

[Even if they lose Diablo, they will be able to establish a kingdom.]

The man at the center of their attention, Elpis, kept on reciting the pledge, “I, Elpis, swear that I will use my body, my spirit, my everything to carry ‘his’ every command forever.”

“Shit! Shit!”

“Sir Brod! Stop him! Why aren’t you stopping him?!”

Despite everyone’s desperate screams, Brod remained silent. He only looked at Elpis. With each and every line that Elpis recited, Verus’ smile deepened, while the members of Let’s Eat sect fell deeper into despair. What brought them more despair was...

‘Can we really fight to protect him if we’re not bound?’

.

‘Are we going to fight for Elpis without waiting for Minhyuk’s decision?’

No matter what they felt, the fact that they would risk everything they had built falling apart, if they were to fight against Great Demon Verus right now, would remain unchanged. It was more correct to say that they did not ‘dare’ to decide what to do. And they knew that Elpis felt the same. That was why they felt even more bitter. They told him not to go, but they did not know if it was the right decision.

[Keuhahahahahaha!]

Great Demon Verus' terrifying laughter rang loudly in the area.

“Whether it's ten years, a hundred years, or an eternity, as long as I am breathing and living, I will live for him and him alone.”

Verus felt delighted. Lesser Demon Diablo, the unruly demon, was completely in his hands now. This was all thanks to the eternal contract, 'Book of Permanence'! With this, Verus would be able to completely exploit him forever. And he would have no other choice but to follow him. After all, this contract would be for life! Verus would erase him from the memories of the members of Let's Eat Sect and would use him to erase the Let's Eat Sect's existence.

[Fufufufufufufu!]

Verus' laugh resonated loudly and plunged everyone into the depths of despair. Diablo only needed to recite a few lines and everything would be over.

“I will be his sword, his shield, his vassal. And he will be my king, my heaven, my world. I, Elpis, am signing this life-long contract with...”

Amidst Verus' delight and Let's Eat Sect's despair, Elpis took out his dagger and cut his finger. A bright red glow flashed from the parchment as a drop of his blood fell down on the 'Book of Permanence'. Then, Elpis uttered the name of his contractor, “Minhyuk.”

The Book of Permanence turned into blood and entered Elpis' body. Just like that, the contract has been signed.

Grasp—

Elpis. His name meant hope. He stood up and held his sword to cut down the demon in front of him. Then, a notification rang for all of the members of Let's Eat Sect.

[Guild Master Minhyuk has logged in.]