

Gourmet 571

Chapter 571: Battle of the Thrones (Middle)

Who was the strongest person in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom? There was a lot of discussion about this. Lesser Demon Diablo, who was now called Elpis, and Food God Minhyuk, the holder of a god class and the Beyond the Heavens King, would be the strongest. Most of the debates went on like that.

However, for those in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, there was nothing to discuss about. If you asked the members of the kingdom, all of them would answer one person and one person alone with great confidence and certainty.

The Mercenary King, previous escort of Rocard Kingdom's Queen Iris, and the only livestock farmer in the kingdom: Beyond the Heavens' Sword Brod.

The members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were confident that he was the strongest in their kingdom. In fact, even though Ghost Spear Ben had become a Spear God now, there was no certainty that he would win against Brod in a fight.

Many of the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were curious about Brod's identity. This was because Brod was declared as the Mercenary King that roamed the continent but none of his past deeds and records were known to the world. But now, it was finally revealed. He was someone that stood toe to toe with the emperor, Nerva Sephiroth, of the Luvien Empire, that would lead Athenae's second era.

Although he did not take the position of the 'Battle God's Sword' and rose to the throne to become the Emperor, he was still the most powerful God's Sword that could exert tremendous power. Of course he was the 'God's Sword' of the past but the fact that he was the strongest and most powerful Sword among all of the God's Swords present in the Battle of Thrones remained unchanged.

Brod had left Minhyuk and Beyond the Heavens Kingdom on his own for everyone's sake. But an unknown force suddenly dragged him here. Brod was able to analyze the situation quickly the moment he arrived.

"..."

"..."

"..."

Brod's figure finally appeared once the thick cloud of dust settled down. He was still as tall as ever, with his height of two meters, and his piercing glare was still enough to make everyone that tried to approach him falter in their steps.

[B, Brod... has come back!]

[Absolute God's Sword Brod! His identity as Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's livestock farmer has been revealed!]

[I have heard rumors about Brod being 'dead'. But surprisingly enough, he's very much alive and not a tad bit dead!]

Indeed, Brod's figure had not been seen in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom recently. Rumors about Brod not being able to withstand the power coursing through his veins and ended up dying because of it started to spread in public. And because Beyond the Heavens Kingdom never took a solid stance and explained this matter, everyone believed this to be the truth.

But then, Brod returned as the 'Absolute God's Sword'.

Then, the gates of the kingdom opened as the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and Korea's top rankers rushed out. Brod was, in fact, Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's Commander-in-chief. Elpis was temporarily holding this position but Beyond the Heavens' Sword Brod's teachings and influence were so great that all of the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom still remembered them. On top of that, Brod had a force that was equal to ten thousand forces. No one would be afraid as long as he was on the battlefield with them. The members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, a mere 1,000-strong force, stood in a line behind Brod and forced the 100,000-strong troops to take a step back.

Then, Calauhel shouted, "Morons!!! All of you are rankers, prominent rankers from all over the world! Yet you're afraid of just those numbers?"

The rankers immediately came back to their senses. They were not a hundred thousand ordinary troops fighting in this war; they were like a hundred thousand top-ranking knights. It did not matter how strong a person was, as long as enough numbers ganged up on him, they would still win.

However, there was something that they had overlooked. As of the moment, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's rankers' stats and skill damage had dramatically increased from their continuous victories. On top of that, they received the effects of Kimaris' 'Unparalleled Bravery'. They had also received a 'special privilege' after the system recognized that they were being attacked by an alliance, which allowed them to receive special rewards in the form of stat increases, potions, or 'skill cooldown reset parchments' every time they won.

Brod took a deep breath as he looked at the people lined up on both of his sides. He had missed all of them dearly as he continued to fight his lonely battle to protect Minhyuk and his kingdom. It was a pity that he could not see His Majesty right now.

Still, 'Commander-in-chief' Brod uttered the words that Minhyuk always said whenever they were faced with many enemies, "Wipe them out."

Clank, clank, clank, clank, clank—

The moment Brod gave his orders, Great Pirate Gorfido's Ten Thousand Chain immediately lengthened and stretched out. The elongated Ten Thousand Chain formed a loop and captured around 1,000 of the rankers at the vanguard.

Crack—

The moment Gorfido clenched his fists, the chains tightened and cracked the enemies' bones. Then, Brod and Elpis immediately took the vanguard and stepped forward. Brod and Elpis, the Sword and Shield of Beyond the Heavens; the combination of these two people were so overpowered that no ordinary ranker could match against them. The Devil Judge's Sword slaughtered several enemies in one slash, as hundreds of wolves jumped out from Brod's sword and tore several more apart.

Then, there was Kimaris...

Baaaaaaaaaang—

...whose gigantic axe split his enemies heads with every swing. Following their lead, the rankers of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom cast their skills one after the other.

“Hell’s Flaming Red Carriage!!!”

When Ace, who beat Dongsan Elementary School’s Shanks, punched out, as a gigantic carriage covered with blazing flames suddenly shot out. However, despite the shocking display of attack, the enemy troops just snickered at him.

“We’re also rankers.”

“We can easily defend against an attack like that.”

But things went differently from what they thought.

Craaaaack—

The carriage covered in blazing flames charged on and received plenty of attacks from the enemies, but the attack itself was not offset. After all, all of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s guild members and the South Korean rankers temporarily had higher stats and skill damage than their enemies.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

Just like that, Hell’s Flaming Red Carriage exploded in the midst of the enemy troops. Meanwhile, two men jumped high above the enemy troops. These two were the strongest fighters in the South Korean ranking board. These two were none other than Master of Kicks Ares and Master of Fists Khan. Khan used his ‘Giant’s Punch’ and punched down toward the ground.

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

At the same time, several attacks bombarded Khan’s body.

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

“Ughh!”

It did not matter how much stronger they became compared to their enemies, the moment they got hit by a one-shot kill attack, their HP would eventually fall. At the same time, a kick from Ares, who jumped together with Khan, came slamming into the ground.

“Dragon’s Dive.”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The strike was like a death sentence to the people below. The Dragon’s Dive struck the same place where Khan’s Giant’s Punch fell down, causing a short earthquake and a fissure to spread out. Hundreds of their enemies died with their combo. Then, Genie’s whip extended and wrapped around the two people, who were still in the air under the constant attacks of the enemies, and dragged them back.

“Haaa... Why do the two of you always like to show off?” Genie clicked her tongue as she swung her whip around. With a swing of her whip, all of the attacks that came

toward the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were all offset. Of course, the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom did not stop and quickly cast the skills that they used before once again.

“Dragon’s Dive!!!”

“Giant’s Punch!!!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

The players could not understand the situation. This was because they did not know about the items that the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had received as a special privilege. Yes, what Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was aiming for was now clearly revealed here. The risks in facing countless enemies would increase as time went by, but the more they fought, the stronger they got and the better privileges they would receive. This would then allow them to widen the gap between them and the other players. In the end, a ranker at Level 500 would be no match against rankers at Level 600 or Level 700.

The guild members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom continued to fight like that. On top of that, they also had Mercenary King Brod, Lesser Demon Elpis, Great Pirate Gorfido, Demon Kimaris, and even Spear God Ben. Each and every single one of them were stronger than a named boss-rank existence. Eventually, the 100,000-strong troops started to lose their momentum.

“This is impossible...” Calauhel muttered, his face twisting into an ugly expression after witnessing a completely ridiculous scene in front of him. Over 40,000 rankers that had died under their hands.

In the midst of all this, notifications still kept on ringing in Genie’s ears.

.

[You have hunted 5,000 rankers.]

[You have achieved an astounding record during the Battle of Thrones.]

[Additional items have been added to your special rewards.]

[You can now use the consumable items in your possession.]

[...10,000 rankers.]

Genie’s face turned brighter at the continuous notifications that rang in her ears. The more enemies came at them, the more things they gained, which would allow them to become stronger and finally prepare for a counter attack. The moment that happened, they would immediately strike another kingdom and take away their throne.

But then, notifications suddenly started to pop up one after the other.

[Japan’s Defense has ended.]

The defense event was slowly coming to an end. This meant that Brod would also disappear soon. And Brod was also aware that he would soon be whisked away from this place too. So, he began doing his final spurt. At the same time, a shocking notification rang for the rest of the world.

[America has been the first to successfully hunt a God's Sword!]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

It was very shocking. Even Joy Co. Ltd. found it shocking and unexpected that a country that could hunt a God's Sword would appear at this point. Of course, amazing special rewards would be bestowed to the country that succeeded in hunting a God's Sword.

Finally, Brod began to disappear. He said, “Please tell His Majesty that I will come back soon.”

The huge alliance army was relieved to see Brod finally disappear. Things would improve now with his absence. However, Brod had also received several special privileges after hunting so many of them.

“Final Chapter,” Brod uttered, killing 5,000 rankers in one go with the Mercenary's Pinnacle Swordsmanship's final chapter, “Wolf's Death.”

In that instant, a thousand wolves, not a hundred, shot out from Brod's sword and devoured the enemies.

“Mercenary's Massacre.”

“Wolf's Howl.”

“Slaughtering Wolf.”

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

The Slaughtering Wolf was a skill with a system that could immediately recognize the twelve strongest and most threatening people from the bunch and target them, devouring and slaughtering them all in one go. When Brod finally disappeared, only 20,000 people were left in the allied troops.

“...”

“...”

Everyone turned silent at the intense and lingering fear and emotions that Brod left them before he disappeared. Meanwhile, the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom slowly started to retreat, trying to get back inside the safety of their castle once again. But then, Calauhel, who only had 40% of his HP left after being hit by Brod's Slaughterer Wolf, heard a surprising, but welcome, notification.

[Ariot Kingdom has joined the alliance!]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Ariot Kingdom was none other than ‘America’. That was not all.

[Mt. Fuji Kingdom has joined the alliance!]

[Velveno Kingdom has joined the alliance!]

[Kaynon Kingdom has joined...!]

All of the countries that have not joined the alliance yet immediately joined them. This was to capture and defeat the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom because the contributions that they had accumulated had reached an unprecedented level to the point that they could not chase after them anymore. With America’s initiative, everyone immediately united. And...

“F*ck.”

...Genie’s face turned ugly. Far in the distance, 26 kings rode on horseback and charged toward where they were. At the vanguard was ‘America’s Strongest’, Alexander.

Everyone wondered who would win if the Food God and Alexander did a 1:1 PVP. None of them was sure. Alexander’s fame and greatness in Athenae was true in name and in reality. He was actually the most favored ‘King’ in this event. Also, he was 1.5x stronger than usual. And the same went for the other kings.

The kings immediately made a decision, they would begin the second round today. And Alexander, who was riding upfront on his horse, shouted, “Cataclysm.”

Baaaaaaaang—

Everyone watched in surprise as Alexander’s sword became hundreds of times larger than normal, hacking down at the huge walls and devouring the Korean rankers that were trying to retreat. The walls began to crack. However, the most important fact here was...

“America has received a special privilege after hunting the God’s Sword...” Genie murmured.

“Retreat! Hurry...!”

The Korean rankers dashed at full speed and retreated away from the bridge. But Alexander, still sitting atop his horse, muttered again, “Cataclysm.”

Once again, the walls were hit by Alexander’s ridiculously OP skill, Cataclysm. This was the strongest skill in Alexander’s arsenal, a skill that he had obtained after overcoming the humiliation that he received from Athenae: World War. It was an unknown Absolute God’s Secret. With its power, the walls of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were split in half. And...

Thud, thud—

Even the castle seemed to have been split in half. A thick cloud of dust rose and obscured everything from view, even the current status of the retreating Korean rankers.

The entire world was brought into a turmoil. And Alexander? He smiled wryly and thought, *‘In the end, Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will be defeated, Minhyuk.’*

The entire world was in a buzz. Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was the strongest and most prominent kingdom in the world. But it took just two strikes from Alexander’s sword and the castle seemed to be split in half. While everyone watched with anticipation, Joy Co. Ltd. sighed and lamented.

“In the end, our country still can’t fight against America.”

“Alexander is truly a ranker standing at the summit. He just received a King’s Special Privilege yet he was able to split the walls in half with his sword alone?”

Sitting among them was President Kang Taehoon with a grin plastered on his face.

“President?”

At the call of one of the board members, Kang Taehoon gestured and said, “It’s not over yet.”

The board members sitting with him right now were only responsible for the management and operation of Joy Co. Ltd. That was why they did not know about the details inside the game. However, there was something that they did know.

“Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had received a special privilege for creating the best castle.”

“Yes.”

“That’s right.”

“I bet you’re all thinking that the castle has already collapsed, right?”

All of them wondered why Kang Taehoon suddenly asked this. But then, the thick cloud of dust finally settled down. Suddenly, one of the board members jumped up from their seat and shouted, “Im, impossible...!”

And what appeared in front of everyone was another wall behind the wall.

“A, a double rampart?!!!”

That was right. Amidst the settling dust, the broken and collapsed wall fell down, only to reveal another thick and sturdy wall.

Chapter 572: Battle of the Thrones (Middle)

Alexander was the strongest ranker in Athenae, famous and well-loved by everyone both in the game and in reality. There were even rumors that Alexander had changed from his legendary class:

Ghost of the Battlefield, to the God class: God of the Battlefield's Descendant. This was actually the truth.

At first, America intended to occupy one country after another, unlike what the other countries had planned. However, they changed their minds. America had to win the Battle of the Thrones. They had no need for the honor of second place. If things continued at this rate, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would sit on the Supreme Throne. So, America decided to join the alliance. Was it cowardly?

'In the face of life and death, cowardice is just an excuse that the weak use.'

That was right. To many, fighting inside Athenae was a matter of life and death. Accusing someone of being cowardly when they were fighting for their survival was just plain foolish.

Alexander used his ultimate skill to put a crack on the walls of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Just like its name, a cataclysm had fallen upon the walls when Alexander swung his sword. After creating the first crack, Alexander used 'Cataclysm' once again and finally split the walls in half.

There was no such thing as a castle with indestructible walls. This was especially true when the strongest 'kings' of each country had gathered together. All of the kings watched in rapt attention as the dust settled down, waiting for the right moment to slaughter the enemies that were definitely overcome with fear.

But when the dust cleared out, what appeared in front of them was a wall that looked more solid and sturdier than the one before.

"...!"

"...!"

The kings present were all shocked. And it was not just them, even the viewers and commentators from all over the world were also shocked.

"What?"

"H, how..."

"A wall behind a wall?"

They might not know this, but Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had already predicted all of the situations that they would most likely face. The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was aware that they would be receiving intense attacks from most, if not all, of the participating countries, so they designed a castle with complete defense in mind. The construction of the castle had been led by Olger, Golden Hammer Dwarf Lant's disciple and one of the best architects in Athenae.

Immediately after the reveal of another wall...

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

Atlas, the City in the Skies, began to descend to the castle. Once the territory settled down, there was only a small gap left on the upper part of the castle walls. The City in the Skies descended to protect the inside of the castle.

"What an extremely grand view."

“As expected, we should definitely nip Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in the bud before it could even sprout.”

“...So, they knew all along?”

Among the shocked and amazed players, a man was looking around the kings with his mouth twitching. When the kings looked back at him, he said, “I’m close with the Food God.”

“...”

“...”

*‘What the hell is wrong with this f*cking bastard...?’*

The man’s name was Kentaro. And although Kentaro was smiling, his hands were already soaked with sweat.

‘As expected, your kingdom is strong.’?

Kentaro actually did not have any ill feelings toward Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. He simply joined the alliance to win.

Despite the steadfastness that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had displayed, the kings did not show a hint of agitation. After all, they were the best rankers in the world and the leaders of their own country.

“All we have to do is take that down, right?”

A Qigong Master used the ‘qi’ or the energy in their body to attack. Not many people chose to become a Qigong Master, since it was very difficult to control and use. However, there was one person that chose to use his ‘qi’ as if he was ‘one with his body’. This person was none other than Greece’s King, Disaster Qigong Master Demetrys.

Rumbleeeeeeeee—

The kings were 1.5x stronger than usual. Their skill levels increased too. Just like that, the best Qigong Master, Demetrys, began to gather the qi in the surroundings. The air vibrated fiercely as small debris and stone began to float. The tremendous amount of qi...

“Thunder’s Roar.”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

...slammed straight into the walls of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, shaking the castle and everything within it.

[Cr, crazy.]

[As expected of Demetrys, the number one in the Qigong Master Rankings.]

On top of that, many of the rankers inside the castle suffered from bleeding ears. But Qigong Master Demetrys did not stop there; he drew the water from the lake surrounding the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and created a tsunami.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaa—

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

Then, some of the kings stepped forward too.

“Since they’re not going to come out on their own, then let’s just destroy them all together.”

The kings that stepped forward included Vietnam’s King, Master Archer Miào. This time, it was the real body and not the clone. There was also Germany’s Infighter Anton, the strongest in the Global Fighter Rankings. Alexander, who transferred and became the God of the Battlefield. Kentaro, Japan’s Musashi. There was also China’s Master Reflector Xu Jiaqi and other kings from all over the world.

Miào stood at the edge of the bridge and drew the strings of her bow. The moment she released the strings of the bow that were almost the size of her body...

[Great Shot.]

[Hundreds of arrows target the enemies’ vital points with an additional 3,500% attack.]

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

Loud bangs accompanied the hundreds of arrows as they shot at the gaps in the walls. Anyone would be shocked if they were told that this was not the sound of a spear hitting its target. Immediately after, Musashi Kentaro, God of Battlefield Alexander, and Infighter Anton dashed on the bridge. This bridge was not a hindrance to these kings. Hundreds of arrows and magic attacks poured out of the small gaps, so small that not even a head could stick through, on the walls. With a ‘poof!’, Kentaro disappeared and emerged somewhere else, completely escaping the onslaught of attacks. Alexander used acceleration and gained a speed four times faster than usual and broke through the siege of attacks. On the other hand, Infighter Anton, whose defense was four times higher than ordinary players, just dashed straight ahead, as if the damage on his body was nothing at all.

Then, a white light formed on Infighter Anton’s fists. Not long after, Anton twisted his waist as he punched the wall.

[Breaking the Mountains.]

[A 5,500% attack will be added to your base attack, allowing you to break anything on your way.]

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

Just one punch and the towering walls shook. On top of that, a crater was formed on the wall where Anton punched. It was as if a meteor had crashed into it, with how deep the crater was.

“Stop them!!!”

“Stop them all!!!”

Not long after, God of Battlefield Alexander stepped on the walls and rushed toward the skies. Despite the countless arrows and magical attacks raining down from above, none of them touched his body. Even Ali’s Diss was cut in half as Alexander sat on the railings of the walls.

“...”

Ali and Alexander's eyes met. Then...

[Ghost of the Battlefield.]

[Inside your designated battlefield, you will have a 4x increase in AGI and a 1.5x attack for three minutes.]

...the top of the walls turned into Alexander's battlefield. Alexander passed by Elpis, Gorfido, and Kimaris, who were trying to restrain him, and only left an afterimage.

"Too, too fast..." Genie mumbled in shock.

Even the Named NPCs could not chase after Alexander as he flitted through the rankers. Although they could not see him there, the rankers were falling one after the other. After cutting down 200 rankers in one go, Alexander jumped down the walls, landed gently on the floor and began to climb up the other end of the walls.

Meanwhile, Kentaro had already sneaked inside the castle.

Fall—

The rankers began to fall and collapse silently.

"What the hell? Keok!"

One of the rankers collapsed, blood spurting out of his neck. Although they tried to roam around and looked for the culprit, they could not find a trace of any intruder at all. Instead of finding the intruder, another of their comrades fell down covered in blood again.

Kentaro silently pulled his katanas from behind him and cast his skill, "Cutting Hay."

The skill was very simple, yet the effect was beyond imagination.

Piiiiing—

All of the rankers within twenty meters of Kentaro were cut down by his blade, his movements as swift as light.

"What, what should we do?!!"

"Give us your orders!!!"

"All of the rankers are dying!!!"

"Beyond the Heavens!!!"

"What are we going to do?!!!"

Genie was thrown into confusion. There were only 27 people, yet once these kings stepped forward and attacked the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in earnest, the entire kingdom was left in chaos. The situation right now was something that completely proved how strength was relative and how, despite thousands of members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom attacking their small number, they could not fight back.

[389 South Korean Rankers have expired.]

[556 South Korean Rankers have expired.]

[South Korea's NPC Corr has expired.]

[861 South Korean Rankers have expired.]

What was more, Infighter Anton had already broken through the walls and was already starting a mass slaughter of the South Korean rankers, while Master Archer Miào shot down the archers and the mages standing on top of the walls. It was literally a massacre. From what it looked like, the 27 kings were moving around and trampling on ants.

But then, Genie's gaze turned toward Ares and Khan.

"Uwooooooooooo!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaa!"

The two of them charged forward at the same time, Khan going for Infighter Anton and grabbing both of the man's fists. Meanwhile, Ares grabbed Anton by the waist and dragged him down the walls. Khan immediately jumped down and followed after them.

Baaaaaaaaang—

Then, another bang resounded from somewhere near. When Genie turned around, she saw Elpis stabbing God of the Battlefield Alexander, grabbing him by the collar, then slamming him down on the ground. On the other side, Gorfido had been stabbed by Kentaro's sword. But instead of a groan, a smile adorned his lips. Gorfido tied himself and Kentaro together with his chain and pushed themselves onto the ground. One by one, the thousands of members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom hugged and grabbed their opponents and dragged them on the ground. The South Korean rankers all gnawed their lips.

"They dragged them down to minimize the damage...?"

"Why..."

"Wh, why..."

All of them could not understand. The most natural course of action was to survive longer to get more rewards. At the very least, they had to try their best to stay away from the enemies and lengthen the time that they could stay on the battlefield. But instead of doing that, the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom all dragged their enemies down to the ground.

Meanwhile, on the ground beneath the walls, Khan and Ares were fighting against Infighter Anton after separating from him.

"Giant's Pun..."

Baaaaaaaaang—

Khan aimed his fist and punched strongly toward Infighter Anton but Anton struck against Khan's fist.

Craaack—

“Keuaaaaaack!” Khan screamed, his other hand immediately holding his now broken wrist.

“Khan...!” Ares shouted, flying up as hard as he could to kick Anton on the face. But Anton immediately grabbed Ares’ feet and slammed his back on his knees.

Crack—

“Keeeeoooooooook!”

[Your spine has received damage. You will not be able to move.]

Ares, whose back had been cracked and bent, tried to move but to no avail. Realizing that his attempts were futile, he turned to look at God of Battlefield Alexander, who was pressuring Elpis. NPCs were generally stronger than players and Elpis was the strongest. However, the strongest of all the players, Alexander, was now 1.5x stronger than usual. On top of that, Elpis was already exhausted from the long battle from before. Every time Alexander grazed Elpis’ body, he would leave an afterimage and a trail of blood.

“Urghh!”

As for Gorfido, he was under the attack of three kings. His body had been trapped on the ground by the arrows that Miào shot, while Qigong Master Demetrys had immobilized his Ten Thousand Chains and Ten Thousand Sword by manipulating the qigong in the air as Kentaro’s sword stabbed his abdomen.

“Keuhaaaack!”

The members of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were being thoroughly trampled on the ground below the walls.

‘This is the difference in levels...’

‘Impossible...’

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was the pride of South Korean rankers. They had shown their might and dignity by stopping countless invasions and attacks from large armies. But now, they were flailing around, helpless like children.

Khan punched the ground near Ares, who could only twitch his fingers, in frustration, “Damn it! Damn it!” He wanted to believe that they were the best. But with the server integration, they were shown the reality that many people all over the world were far stronger than them. Just like what they were seeing in front of them. The only thought flashing in their minds was, *‘I want to get stronger. I want to protect the kingdom. I want to trample on those arrogant and strong bastards.’*

But before that, Khan could only turn to Genie and say, “Genie. Close the gates... Urk!”

Genie, who was standing on top of the walls, made eye contact with Khan. This castle was a defensive castle and it had a special ability. In case of an emergency, the entire castle would be covered with a thick, huge iron armor, and form a perfect defense. Of course, seeing the might of the opponents, there was no chance that it would last long. Genie turned to look at the Korean

rankers. The Korean rankers looked at her and nodded, a firm determination flashing in their eyes. Then, she gave her orders, “Open the gates!!!”

“Yes!!!”

Creak, creak, creak, creak—!

Contrary to Khan’s wishes, the closed gates slowly began to open. And when the gates opened, they saw Genie standing in front of tens of thousands of rankers.

“Save the injured and the wounded and crush those damn kings!!!”

Everyone knew that going to the battlefield was tantamount to suicide. But Genie and the Korean rankers already decided. Since it was a losing battle, they should at least fight fiercely and trample their enemies as much as they could. The surviving 35,000 Korean rankers charged forward.

“Wh, what...”

Alexander took a few steps back. They never expected that the Koreans would make such a move. Even Kentaro could not hide his surprise. The 27 kings began to step back from the bridge and pull away from the frontlines.

Even in the past, the unity of the small nation of Korea was strong beyond anyone’s imagination. Finally, the 27 kings and the 35,000 Korean rankers collided.

Chapter 573: Battle of the Thrones (Middle)

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and the South Korean rankers clashed with the 27 kings. They already knew that this battle would be their final battle to determine their position in the Battle of Thrones event.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaah!!!”

“Save Khan and Ares!!!”

“Save Beyond the Heavens!!!”

Plenty of people from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had taken the lead and grabbed their enemies wreaking havoc on the walls and dragged them down to protect South Korea. So, this time, they wanted to be the ones to save the fallen members of Beyond the Heavens.

They began a war with numbers, pushing the enemy back with their overwhelming number of munitions and supplies. At the vanguard stood the Emperor of the Sword Carr, shouting, “Ready!”

Hundreds of swordsman-class players followed behind Carr, all of them rankers that dominated the Korean ranking boards. They held the hilt of the swords on their waists in unison and...

“Quick Draw.”

“Quick Draw.”

...used their AOE skill that allowed them to quickly draw their swords at the speed of light to sweep away the enemies in front of them. Hundreds of troops charged

forward and blocked the kings, breaking their formation. Master Archer Root was also seen charging toward Vietnam's Miáo with hundreds of archers behind him.

Thuuuuump—

Whenever Master Archer Root shot an arrow, Miáo would split it in half mid-air.

Dash, dash, dash, dash—

They both charged forward while firing arrows at each other. Immediately after that, the hundreds of archers behind Root used their skills and fired them toward Miáo.

“Triple Shot!!!”

“Random Shot!!!”

“Fire Arrow!!!”

“Energy Arrow!!!”

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

However, a mysterious golden shield was formed right in front of Miáo. This shield was created by the number one in the Global Tanker Rankings, the one hailed as the God of Shield, Italy's Valentino. It was a skill named 'King's Shield', and it could protect up to thirty of Valentino's recognized allies. On top of that, Valentino's defense was beyond anyone's imagination. Despite the baptism of the archers' skills, the shield still stood tall and strong. And then...

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

“Euaaaaack!”

“Keuaaaaaack!”

“Keok!”

The archers running behind Root died one after another, from Miáo's arrows.

“Damn it!”

This was the difference in strength. Now, they knew what the ordinary players felt whenever they saw them get hit by Root's arrows.

They already expected that a huge army would soon arrive here. At the very least, they wanted to choke these damn kings and hit them hard before the army arrived. But even that was considered difficult.

“Haa... Haa...”

“Heok... Heok...”

Khan and Ares were barely able to support themselves after drinking a bottle of potion each. This was a gruesome battlefield. Tens of thousands of rankers had charged at them, but the 27 kings were not even fazed by their might at all. Thankfully, Elpis and Gorfido were able to keep Alexander tied. But even that seemed like it was very difficult.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

Kentaro swiftly dashed around and stabbed the rankers in their necks one after the other. Master Archer Miáo had almost wiped out the archers. On top of that, Valentino's shield had made it hard for them to attack the kings. Just one clash had forced 3,000 of the 35,000 rankers to log out.

Slaaaaash—

As Genie continued to charge toward the kings, she watched one ranker after another fall down with blood spurting out of their necks as Kentaro killed them. In front of her, there were rankers whose bodies had exploded under Qigong Master Demetrys's attacks. Tens of thousands of people were left at a loss in front of a few dozens of kings. This was a gap that they could not close. The sense of frustration, coupled with the overwhelming loss, was devouring Genie. In the world outside of Korea, there were beings like them that were far stronger than them, people that they were helpless against.

Everything seemed to slow down in Genie's eyes. Even her breathing sounded loud in her ears, "Haa... Haa..."

She felt the nausea creeping up on her as she heaved dryly, "Uuuuuuuuurk!"

Genie knew that things were now over. She wanted to show Minhyuk what they could do. Especially after he said this to her before, *'Genie, I trust you. Although I hope it doesn't happen, if things go wrong someday with my illness, I feel relieved that you're here.'*

As his friend, all she could do was laugh bitterly at Minhyuk's words. Because of that, Genie wanted to show Minhyuk their power so he could be at ease, even when he was not with them, so that they could relieve him of his worries. But the enemies were too strong. They were like a few humans against the great demon.

Genie fell on the floor, gasping as she tried to catch her breath. Her face turned white as a sheet as she watched the guild members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom die one after the other.

Will things end here for us?

But then...

Grab—

...a callused yet warm hand, warmer than anybody else, grabbed her own and brought her back to her feet. Spear God Ben stood in front of her with a kind smile on his face.

One would wonder why Spear God Ben did not move to stop the kings, right? The answer to that was because he could not do so. He had fallen into a deep sleep since he had exhausted all of his stamina after fighting so many battles. His body might have become stronger after he had reached the demigod level, but the power that he could wield as of the moment was at the level of a god. Because of that, every move gnawed at a large chunk of his stamina, which made his body unable to withstand it.

"Genie," Ben called her name, something that he never did often since he always called her as 'Vice Guild Master', softly, "We never learnt to back down."

“...!”

Ben's words struck a chord deep within Genie's heart. That was right. They had to fight until the very end before they could afford to wallow in this frustration. It was something simple, but Spear God Ben had to speak up for her to realize that. Then, Spear God Ben disappeared like a ghost only to appear...

Baaaaaaaang—

Crack!

“Wh, what...!”

...where Alexander was, who was horrified to see that his sword, which he raised at the sudden attack, was now gone. The skill that Spear God Ben used was Dancing Spear, a skill that he could only use.

Baaaaaaaang— Baaaaaaaang—

Alexander's entire arm trembled from the impact of the attack. It had to be known that the kings were currently 1.5x stronger than usual, but the attack still had that much impact on him.

Baaaaaaaang—

In the end, Alexander was sent flying back. The kings all turned toward Spear God Ben after realizing the direness of the situation. With a 'poof!' Kentaro disappeared as dozens of people charged at Ben.

Master Archer Miáo nocked four arrows at once and shot at Ben. Calauhel swung his sword and fired sword lights. However, none of them could stop Spear God Ben. Ben alone could cross blades with 27 kings.

“How...”

“He's alone.”

“But he won't last for long.”

One of the rankers got it right. Spear God Ben's stamina consumption was high and his enemies were 27 people. If he continued to use his overwhelming power to stop them, then it would be Ben who would collapse in the end.

At that moment, they saw more than 200,000 rankers starting to gather where the kings were and close in on them.

“F*ck...”

“We're done for.”

“We lost.”

“We'll all be swept away here.”

They could see the archer and mage rankers preparing for an attack at the vanguard of the 200,000 troops. They would be able to send more than tens of thousands of arrows and thousands of magical

attacks. None of the Korean rankers had the confidence to endure and withstand that attack. Besides, even if they survived that, they would still be trampled on by the 200,000-strong troops. But...

“So, are you just going to offer your neck to them to die?”

...a woman stood in front of them. The woman was Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's vice guild master and the object of envy of all the Korean rankers. She was none other than Genie.

“Or are you going to die fighting?”

Genie's voice had a mocking tone to it. That was right. It was just as she said. Would they just stand there dumbly and wait for their deaths?

“The moment we left those gates, we were already prepared for this to happen, right?”

Yes. They were already prepared for whatever it was that would come at them. They were frustrated by the difference in power that they had forgotten their resolve for a moment.

The sun hanging high up in the sky gradually began to set, dyeing the battlefield with a beautiful hue.

“Let's exit beautifully.”

Genie and the surviving rankers charged at the 200,000-strong troops.

Meanwhile, in front of the 200,000 troops, a man ordered, “Fire.” as tens of thousands of arrows rained down on the Korean rankers. But the Korean rankers continued to charge forward.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

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

South Korea.

Everyone turned mute as they watched the scene on their screens. Even the ones sitting around the large screen of the television in the sauna were left speechless as they watched a complete massacre in front of their very eyes.

[Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—]

[Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!]

Tens of thousands of arrows and thousands of magical attacks were sweeping away the Korean rankers. But the rankers that fell down continued to stand up and charge forward. One of the rankers was doing so despite the arrows stuck deeply in his back.

There were countless people watching this scene on their smartphones as they walked on the streets.

[Ah. Korea's collapse is just right around the corner!]

[The Korean rankers are completely helpless, they are the only ones dying. The Beyond the Heavens King, the Food God has not even joined yet. It seems like their castle will fall before he even comes.]

[They're literally being slaughtered. What a pity... what a real pity...]

One of the commentators could not even finish his words, choked by the overwhelming emotions that he was feeling.

On the TV, the rankers continued to struggle, standing up despite their comrades dying one after another. They stood up whenever they fell and continued on the cycle until they could not do so anymore. Somehow, they were able to reach the enemy troops and cut down those standing at the vanguard.

For those watching, they could not understand why they found these people cool, pride welling up in them, despite their helplessness. Perhaps, it was because the rankers made them think, *'Can I be a ranker like that too?'*

The viewers' passion burned as they continued to watch the slaughter. Although most of the rankers have died, with only 11,000 of them left, the fire burning in their eyes was still alive and well.

And not long after, a notification rang for the entire world that made all of the Koreans cheer...

[Beyond the Heavens' King Minhyuk has entered the 'Battle of Thrones'!]

It was hell on earth. Of the 30,000 surviving troops that charged at the 200,000 enemy troops, 20,000 had been slaughtered. However, they died heroes. Despite being surrounded by 200,000 enemy troops, the Korean rankers put their backs against each other and glared at their enemies, prepared to fight until the very end.

Still, many of the Korean rankers had sustained heavy injuries. If these 200,000-strong troops were to go on a rampage, they would be completely wiped out. Genie, Khan, Locke, Elpis, and Gorfido were barely able to stand now, their breathing ragged. All of the potions that they had received as a special privilege before had been used up, and they only had a bit of their HP left. Even Spear God Ben was fighting a precarious battle with his stamina that was almost running out. Even though everyone could see that they would be wiped out any moment now, Genie still smiled, "We did our best. Do you have any regrets?"

Everyone finally felt relieved after hearing Genie's words. The only thing that they found a pity was the fact that they were so weak that they could not even reach the toes of their enemies. All they wanted to do was feed these kings some big shit.

Then, the enemy troops' commander slowly raised his hand to signal the final attack. But then, at that moment...

[Beyond the Heavens' King Minhyuk has entered the 'Battle of Thrones'!]

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

All of the kings held their breath. The Beyond the Heavens' King was such a powerhouse that it caused them to be tense and nervous at the mere mention of his appearance. All of them were on edge.

But then, Miáo said, "He's alone."

"He should not have come."

"No matter how strong he is, he cannot do anything against us by himself."

Only then did the kings feel relieved. In the end, even if 'he' appeared, he was still alone. But while their words were such, they still did not relax.

"Over there..." Master Archer Miáo, who was standing on the top of the walls, pointed at Minhyuk as he appeared on his throne with a flash of light.

All eyes turned to Minhyuk. And Minhyuk, who was sitting on his throne, turned to the kings and said, "I'm sorry but..."

Minhyuk looked at the crowd arrogantly. The arrogant glint in his eyes made some people snort, some tensed up, while others laughed. But then, a dish suddenly appeared in front of Spear God Ben, who was standing right in front of the kings.

Flash—

"Huh?"

"A dish?"

"A dish in this situation? What..."

The Food God's dishes were known for their outstanding effects and flavor. That was a fact. However, what could one dish do? Not long after, the same dish that appeared in front of Spear God Ben suddenly appeared in front of Khan with another flash of light. The same dish appeared in front of Genie, Elpis, Conir, Ares, Locke, and all of Minhyuk's guild members.

Flash—!

Flash—!

One after another, the same dish appeared in front of all of the Korean rankers. The total number of dishes that appeared exceeded 10,000. It was a completely ridiculous power that no one had ever heard of. The light emitted by the more than 10,000 dishes shone brightly on the battlefield.

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

Minhyuk laughed arrogantly, showing his greatness and majesty like a true and genuine king, as he finally finished his words, "...I'm not alone."

Chapter 574: Battle of the Thrones (Middle)

Inside the Abyss, the Tomb of the Gods, was where Food God Allen created the power of ‘Everyone’s Happiness’ to save the 500,000 hungry people. However, the price that he had to pay was his life.

In this very same Abyss, Minhyuk was faced with the same trial. Minhyuk did not have the power of ‘Everyone’s Happiness’ like the previous Food God. And if he cooked for these hungry people one by one like what the previous Food God did, then the people here would start to kill each other and self-destruct.

‘That was the result of Food God Allen’s arrogance and the constant betrayal that he experienced from the gods.’

After watching how Food God Allen failed, Minhyuk found the easiest way to clear this trial.

[You can borrow the power of three gods.]

The answer was in this notification.

‘This was the simplest answer but he did not choose it.’

The Food God was someone that did not want anyone to be hungry. Minhyuk could not really say that he was stupid. Perhaps he chose that path because he felt so alone. After all, the Absolute Gods kept him from moving forward with his ideals, while those that he helped relieve the hunger they were experiencing craved and coveted his dishes and expertise more.

“I’m hungry...” a young boy said as he approached Minhyuk.

A bitter smile hung at the corners of Minhyuk’s lips as he looked at the people around him that were staring at him with blank and empty eyes. Then, he made the easiest choice that he had ever made in his life, “I will borrow the powers of the God of Creation, the God of Farming, and the God of Life.”

[You have borrowed the power of the gods.]

[The God of Farming asks you what kind of power you need.]

[The God of Life asks you to make a different choice from what the previous Food God chose.]

[The God of Life looks at you with eyes full of anticipation.]

Minhyuk looked around him. Why were 500,000 people starving in this kind of place? The answer to that question was quite easy to predict. They probably lost in a war and had to run here and hide as refugees. The problem was that the land that they chose to hide in had soil that was dry and cracked, and there was no sunshine shining from above. The place was literally a wasteland where no tree or grass could grow.

“God of Life, please turn this place into a place where nature can live and thrive.”

Then, the ground began to shake.

Rumbleeee—

As the ground shook, the dry and cracked land turned fertile and green. Roots began to spring up on the ground, turning into tens of thousands of trees. Then, the sunlight finally made an appearance in this land where no light has shone for so long.

“Sun, sunlight!”

“There’s sunlight!!!”

The people, who had not seen the light of the day for a long time, frowned at the glaring light, before their expressions slowly turned into bright and wide smiles. But that was not the end.

“God of Creation, please give me many seeds to grow various ingredients.”

With his words, huge bags appeared behind him. The bags were marked with ‘Wheat’, ‘Rice’, ‘Barley’, ‘Potatoes’, and many more.

“Waaaaaaaaah...”

“Amazing.”

“That’s so mysterious.”

Minhyuk then grabbed one of the bags and began to sprinkle the seeds on the ground.

“Let’s follow him.”

“He must be a god!”

“Aaah. What a great man!!!”

The people followed behind Minhyuk, copying how he sprinkled the seeds from the bag on the ground and began to sprinkle them in every direction. Minhyuk looked just like the Pied Piper, with the people following behind him.

After sowing all of the seeds everywhere in the village, Minhyuk looked at the ground and said, “God of Farming, please let these seeds grow well.”

Immediately after, the seeds that Minhyuk and the people had sown began to sprout and grow at a rapid pace. In the vast land that had nothing on it before, long stalks of wheat, rice and barley began to sway in the wind as tens of thousands of potatoes formed under the once dry land. In another place, ripe apples that were ready for the picking appeared on the branches of the trees.

“W, wooaaaaaaaaah...”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaah...!”

Everyone cheered loudly at the sight of the fruit. Those that had eaten the fruit and had regained their energy began to grab their farming tools and run toward the field. Sometimes, people just could not do things alone. There would definitely be some things that one had to do with someone else.

Just like that, Minhyuk created an environment where the hungry people could eat their fill. All that was left for them to do was to harvest the crops, cook and fill their stomachs by themselves. This was the answer that Minhyuk had thought of to solve this trial. This was the easiest path.

[You have cleared the trial that the Food God could not clear.]

[The gods are amazed at what you have achieved.]

[Some of the gods are praising your methods.]

[With the God of Life's praise, your HP has risen by 1% permanently.]

[With the God of Farming's praise, your HP has risen by 1% permanently.]

[With the God of Blacksmith's praise, your DEX...]

Countless gods praised Minhyuk. They were gods that had met their demise, but it seemed like they could still live as long as they were within the 'Abyss'. And then, the last god...

[You have acquired the Food God's Absolute God's Secret: 'Everyone's Happiness'.]

[With the Food God's praise, you will be able to use the Absolute God's Secret: 'Everyone's Happiness' once at Level 9.]

[The Food God is smiling at you.]

...was also looking at Minhyuk, who had inherited his powers. And without any hesitation, Minhyuk checked the Absolute God's Secret that the Food God had created, 'Everyone's Happiness'.

Absolute God's Secret

?If you use Everyone's Happiness before cooking, the same dish will appear in front of ten people after you finish cooking.

?The effect of the dish would be the same for everyone.

?Your skill proficiency will increase whenever you create epic-grade, legend-grade or god-grade dishes or whenever the person that you cooked for is satisfied with the dish.

Everyone's Happiness at Level 1 was already an amazing skill. However, there were parts where it fell short of Minhyuk's expectations.

'The penalty for use is too high.'

The fact that the same dish with the same effects would be created for ten people at the same time was amazing, but the 0.5% decrease in all stats was just too much. This meant that the higher the skill user's stats were, the greater the penalty that they would receive. Because of that, Minhyuk had to weigh the pros and cons of using the skill. Would losing his stats and feeding ten people be worth

it, or would it be much better if he preserved his stats? But with the Food God's 'praise', Minhyuk would be able to use Everyone's Happiness at Level 9 once. After checking the skill at Level 9...

"Keok!!!"

Minhyuk choked on his spit in shock.

'I take back my words about the penalty being too high.'

What were the effects of Everyone's Happiness at Level 9? It was the same 0.5% decrease in all stats as a penalty. However, the number of people had changed to infinite.

"..."

'Is there really such a ridiculously OP skill like this?'

Of course, this was just a special privilege that he could only use once. But even though the skill level would be hard to increase, Minhyuk had confirmed that the number of people that it could feed would increase as the level increased.

At that moment, a whisper arrived.

Genie was a smart woman. So, if she said it was right, then Minhyuk knew that her decision was right. At this moment, he realized that he had no more time to spare. Minhyuk quickly chose the parts that he needed from God's Carefully Nurtured Abyss Cow. It had to be known that each part of this cow had different special abilities. And Minhyuk needed to choose the most fitting special abilities that would help the people that were still fighting and struggling in the Battle of Thrones after eating his buffed dish.

The part that Minhyuk chose was none other than the beef's fan meat. The special effect of God's Carefully Nurtured Abyss Cow's flat iron was...

Each part of the cow could produce a completely different effect; it could also allow Minhyuk to choose whether he would have a permanent effect or a buff effect. The permanent effect literally meant that the strengthening would remain with them forever. On the other hand, the buff effect would only be a temporary addition to their strength. This was the reason why permanent effects had a lower increase in power, while buff effects could produce tens of times of effect compared to the permanent one.

After choosing the beef's fan meat as his main ingredient, Minhyuk proceeded to choose his other ingredients from the ones that he had obtained from Arlene's Abyss Field.

Onion. The effect of the onion grown in the Abyss Field could recover a certain amount of the individual's MP.

Potatoes. It could recover a part of an individual's HP.

Garlic. It had the effect of increasing all of the individual's defense.

King Oyster Mushroom. It could increase the individual's attack by a small amount.

After choosing various ingredients like that, Minhyuk began to cook.

'I don't have time. I have to make a simple yet delicious meal.'

The beef's fan meat was named as such because it resembled the fans spread out and held by the king's maids of the past, as they fanned the king on both sides. This part was also used for bulgogi, or could also be used for a simple grill, or steak.

After a brief pause, Minhyuk decided on what to cook.

'Cube steak.'

Cube steak literally meant a steak cut into cubes. They were very easy to eat and tasted good. Before he started cooking, Minhyuk triggered his skill first, "Use Everyone's Happiness."

[Everyone's Happiness will be applied to the dish that you will make.]

[With the Food God's praise, Everyone's Happiness has reached Level 9.]

The first thing that Minhyuk did was to pat the beef fan meat with some kitchen towel to remove the blood. Then, he sprinkled it with some salt, pepper, and oil, enough to make one think that he had sprinkled too much. Then, he chopped the vegetables that he would grill together with the meat.

Tic, tic, tic, tic, tic—

After turning the stove on, Minhyuk placed the frying pan on top and spread some olive oil on it when it started to smoke. After everything was evenly heated, Minhyuk carefully placed the thick beef fan meat on the pan.

Sizzleeee—

White steam rose from the pan as a delightful aroma wafted in the air. After exactly one minute, Minhyuk flipped the meat over.

Sizzleeeee—

It looked like the other side had been burnt but that was not the case at all. It was still a tad bit red than what was usually preferred. And after another minute, Minhyuk flipped the meat again. As he grilled the meat, Minhyuk grabbed his tongs and scissors and cut the meat into cubes. Now, the meat has turned into an easy-to-eat cube steak. When Minhyuk poured another drizzle of olive oil on the pan, a burst of flame rose up.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Minhyuk cooked all of the steak in the fire together with the garlic, onion and mushroom. Finally, he made a potato salad by mashing some boiled potatoes and adding some mayonnaise and sugar into the mix.

Minhyuk poured the cube steak on one side of the plate. Then, he added the well-grilled garlic, onion, and mushrooms on another side, and the potato salad on the other. After finishing everything, Minhyuk did not delay further.

“Arlene. You’re watching, right? Let me out.”

Then, Minhyuk disappeared in a flash of light.

A beautiful scene unfolded when the first dish appeared in a flash of light. Then, the same dish appeared in front of all the South Korean rankers.

“What’s this...?”

“The Food God’s dish?”

“He prepared a dish for 10,000 people...?”

The 10,000 surviving Korean rankers were all shocked to see the same dish appear in front of them. Even the 27 kings were shaking their heads in disbelief.

“This is ridiculous. How can he make 10,000 buffed dishes? That’s completely impossible.”

“This is definitely a bug!”

“This is unacceptable!”

The kings’ words were completely reasonable. The Battle of Thrones was a place where all consumables could not be used. Restrictions like this would only be lifted with a special privilege. The 10,000 buffed dishes should obviously have been under restriction.

Even the entire world was calling this a ‘hack’. A game hack was an illegal manipulation of the game that could enable an abnormal behavior of one’s character. For example, a single player that could use a power equivalent to a billion’s power. However, a notification soon rang for everyone present.

[This is Joy Co. Ltd.’s announcement. South Korea’s King, Player Minhyuk, is not using a ‘hack’.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Both the kings and the world were shocked. If that was not a hack, then was it a skill that the Food God possessed? However, one thing was for sure. If all the surviving 10,000 Korean troops ate those dishes, then the force that they could exert would increase by a ridiculous degree.

“Prepare to fire!”

The kings hurriedly raised their hands in signal. Tens of thousands of archers and mages prepared to launch another volley of attacks. But, at that moment, Ali, who received Minhyuk's whisper in advance, jumped amidst the 10,000 surviving Korean rankers.

Ali and Minhyuk made eye contact.

'Sorry, Ali.'

'It's alright.'

Then, a huge light exploded from within Ali's body, engulfing the Korean rankers and dragging them up above the walls. This was a massive 'Mass Teleport', something that no player had ever seen before.

"He's mass teleporting 10,000 people?"

"..."

The kings were all left speechless. The move was very shocking but the price to pay was too high. To do one of these massive Mass Teleports, Ali had to maximize and exhaust all of the power stored in Vormon's Mana Heart. In other words, the price was Ali's death.

"I leave everything to you."

The rankers looked at the cube steak in their hands as Ali disappeared from sight. Then, the kings began to dash to where they were.

"Stop them!!!"

"No matter what happens, don't let them eat that!!!"

"Everyone, attack!!!"

Tens of thousands of arrows and magical attacks rained down on the Korean rankers.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk left his throne and stood atop the walls, his red cape carrying the symbol of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom fluttering behind him.

"Steel Armor Mode."

[The castle walls' Steel Armor Mode has been activated.]

[The walls' defenses have quadrupled.]

Clank, clank, clank, clank, clank—

Steel armor began to rise from the ground and cover the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's castle. Inside the castle that was slowly being covered by the steel armor sat many Korean rankers, who were looking at Minhyuk in worry. Minhyuk just looked at them with a smile on his face before jumping off of the walls.

Dash—

The entire castle was now covered with steel armor, but the 27 kings and the 200,000-strong troops still charged forward. Meanwhile, South Korea's chosen King, with his red cape carrying the

symbol of a fork and a knife crossed together on his back, took a step toward them and said, “Try to get past me. That is if you can.”

Chapter 575: Battle of the Thrones (Bottom)

[You have participated in the Battle of the Thrones!]

[Each country’s king would have 1.5x more power than usual.]

[All of your stats and skill damage will increase by 50%. Your skill cooldown will decrease by 50%.]

[You participated three days after the start of the Battle of the Thrones. You will receive a penalty. All of your stats and skill damage will decrease by 15%.]

[You have received a penalty! Your skill cooldown will increase by 15%!]

These were the penalty notifications that rang in Minhyuk’s ears the moment he joined the Battle of the Thrones. He was definitely stronger than usual, but he also received a little less special privilege compared to the other kings. For top rankers, a 15% debuff was a huge penalty. For players that had maintained their original stats, they might even be able to deal with two or three players whose powers had decreased by 15%. Because of that, everyone firmly believed that any percentage decrease in a top ranker’s stats would be a huge blow to their power.

The sight of Minhyuk walking toward the enemies as the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom got covered in steel armor was like a scene from the movies. However, everyone thought that it was a reckless and foolish move.

[Right now, the Food God has received a 15% decrease in power as a penalty. On the other hand, the other kings have received the full extent of the special privilege. No matter how strong the Food God is, it’s absolutely ridiculous for him to think that he can fight against 27 kings who are 15% more powerful than him.]

[That’s not all. There are also 200,000 strong troops behind those kings. He definitely will not last long.]

Food God Minhyuk might last a tad bit longer compared to other rankers since he had his amazing passive reflection and his Slaughterer’s Armor. But the problem was the number of enemies. The kings were also aware of this. They just clicked their tongues at how stupid Minhyuk’s decision was.

‘He shouldn’t have come.’

‘Right here and now, the Food God will record the most disastrous death and defeat in the history of Athenae.’

‘If we defeat him, someone that stood at the peak, today, it will be the first shot that will signal the destruction of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.’

Minhyuk slowly stepped on the bridge and walked toward his enemies. As he continued to move forward, his pace began to increase.

“Don’t think of slacking off!”

“Prepare to attack!!!”

However, no matter how ridiculously overpowered the Food God was, he was just one single existence. Minhyuk, seeing the vigilance in his enemies’ eyes, stomped on the bridge as hard as he could and triggered ‘Like the Wind’ to quickly narrow the distance between him and the enemies. Then, he jumped in the skies and used ‘Like the Wind’ once again.

Dash, dash, dash, dash, dash—

In just a blink, Minhyuk arrived above the kings as he promptly used ‘Like the Wind’ once more. As he passed above them, one of Master Archer Miao’s arrows flew after him. However, before the arrow could make contact, a red and translucent shield was created by the Slaughterer’s Armor and blocked it.

Clang—

The kings looked at the place where Minhyuk was running to. It was where the 200,000 troops were located.

“...?!”

“...?!”

The kings were shocked. What was he doing? Was he a moth to a flame? Was he running there to jump in the pit on his own? No. Of course not. Alexander thought that it was not the case at all.

“Don’t tell me...”

Alexander frowned at the sight. The moment Minhyuk jumped in the middle of the 200,000 troops, the kings received a restriction. They were not allowed to use their AOE skills anymore. This was because Athenae’s AOE skills did not distinguish between friend or foe, so it was something that should be used away from allies. An AOE skill would kill plenty of players.

And Minhyuk, who jumped in the middle of the large army, was subjected to countless amounts of damage.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash—

Players with various classes bombarded him with their strongest attack skill and put heavy pressure on him. Just like that, Minhyuk’s HP dropped at a rapid pace. Asura’s Shield popped out to protect him but there was obviously a limit to how much the shield could stop.

Minhyuk looked at his rapidly falling HP, as characters began to appear on the blade of his Continent Destroyer’s Sword. The word that appeared on the blade of his sword was none other than ‘Explosion’.

[You have activated Explosion Mode.]

[In Explosion mode, you will have a 40% chance of triggering bolts of lightning with 2,500% additional attack and 1,400% additional damage in a ten meter radius for every basic attack you launch.]

[There is a 15% chance of your enemy falling into a four second stunned state after getting struck by Explosion.]

Along with that, another notification rang.

[Your HP has dropped below 30%!]

Unlike his overwhelming momentum earlier, he looked quite a bit ragged as it got harder and harder to endure the onslaught of attacks from countless rankers. However, when Minhyuk struck at one of the players that tried to block his path...

Rumbleeeeeeee—

Baaaaaaaang!

A bloody lightning bolt fell down from the sky and inflicted 2,500% damage to the player. But it did not end there. The lightning bolt extended to a radius of ten meters and struck more than a hundred players in one go.

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaaack!”

“Kghk, aaaaaaack!”

Then, beads of blood floated from their bodies that flew and got absorbed into Minhyuk’s own.

[Slaughterer’s Absorption.]

[You have a 3% chance that you will be able to convert 50% of the damage that you have dealt to your opponents into HP.]

[You have recovered 3,734 HP.]

[You have triggered the 0.7% chance of recovering your mental power and stamina. Your mental power and stamina has been restored.]

[You have a 3% chance that you will be...]

Since Minhyuk was able to inflict damage to dozens of his enemies, the amount of HP that he recovered had increased. In an instant, his HP had recovered to 60%.

Baaaaaaaang—

Another activation of the skill and his HP had returned to 100%. Meanwhile, the kings, who were watching Minhyuk trigger his skill as he dug deeper into their army, were all shocked.

“What, what the hell...”

“Isn’t, isn’t that the Absolute God’s Secret...?”

The sealing of Minhyuk’s Absolute God’s Secret was known to the world through a live broadcast. The kings felt relieved to know that the skill had been sealed. Especially after witnessing how the Secret was a complete and utter cheat in that video. But now, Minhyuk’s Absolute God’s Secret was actually unsealed and wreaking havoc amongst their troops.

Baaaaaaaang—

The players around Minhyuk did not die so easily with just one swing of his sword. This was because they were rankers. But Food God Minhyuk's AGI was very high. He could wield his sword ten times in just two seconds. And in every four swings out of the ten swings, an explosion would be triggered. In every two seconds, dozens of players would turn to ash and disappear. And...

[Your Overlord's Mana has increased by 0.8%.]

[Your Overlord's Mana has increased by 1.2%.]

[Your Overlord's Mana has increased by 1.4%.]

...there was still this. Simply put, the more Minhyuk fought against powerful enemies, or even against large numbers of enemies, his Overlord's Mana would increase.

In just a few minutes, Minhyuk was able to dig deep into the large army, killing almost 1,300 rankers at the same time. The kings immediately chased after Minhyuk. Then...

"Sword Catastrophe."

Alexander, the one known as the strongest ranker in the world, swung his sword loaded with tremendous power toward Minhyuk. The moment Minhyuk raised his sword to block the attack, the Sword Catastrophe with an 8,000% additional damage struck him.

"Kghhhhhk!"

Minhyuk's body flew back from the impact of the attack. Seeing this, the kings hurriedly prepared their attacks to inflict more damage. Unbeknownst to them, there was another reason why Minhyuk dared to lead them into this. And he was about to show them that right now.

"Summon Hanwoo."

"Mooooooooooooooooo!"

A cow suddenly appeared in front of Minhyuk, who was now rolling back after flying back a few meters. At the same time, the single attacks that the kings prepared earlier had been shot toward Minhyuk while Hanwoo grew bigger from five, to ten, to twenty, to twenty-five, to thirty until he reached forty meters.

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

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

The attacks that the kings shot out were all blocked by Hanwoo's colossal body. The more shocking part here was the fact that Hanwoo did not really receive much damage despite taking all their attack skills. But they had to remember that Hanwoo was a monster that had single-handedly trampled on 80,000 tankers in an instant.

“Everyone, dod...!”

But before those words could end, Minhyuk, who was barely able to stop himself from rolling further, called out, “Hanwoo.”

“Moooooooooooo!!!”

The Bull Demon King looked at his master. He was very furious to see those people make his master collapse like that. Then, Minhyuk said, “Charge.”

[Charge.]

[Hanwoo’s speed will double the moment he charges in a straight line. Everything that collided with him in his charge would receive double the damage.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

It was literally a disaster. The forty-meter-tall Hanwoo easily trampled on the countless rankers beneath him with his gigantic hooves. From the moment he started his charge, all of the rankers blocking his path got swept away, flying back from the impact of the collision. On top of that, Hanwoo’s speed in this long and straight bridge had doubled. The 200,000-strong troops and rankers that blocked the bridge were all swept away, akin to Moses’ miracle when he opened a path in the Red Sea.

“Keuaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaack!”

“Dodge! Come on, dodge!”

“It’s too fast! Ugh!”

Hanwoo’s basic speed was already fast enough to catch up with Minhyuk, who was at his fastest. What more if his speed was doubled? In a blink, more than 40,000 rankers had died and turned to ashes.

Minhyuk smiled silently, his body shaking slightly as he stood up from the ground. Then, Hanwoo was sucked back inside the Summoning Room. Hanwoo originally could grow only up to thirty meters using his skill ‘Body Enlargement’. It was possible for him to grow up to 50 meters. However, once his body grew 50 meters, his summoning would be released after one minute.

The kings, who were now boiling in anger, charged at Minhyuk. But Minhyuk dug into the army once again. While running as if he was escaping from his pursuers, Minhyuk killed more than 1,000 rankers once again. The kings did not give up their chase and were slowly creeping up from behind him.

“Exploding Shot.”

Baaaaaaaaang—

Master Archer Miao sent an arrow toward Minhyuk's back that exploded with an additional 4,000% attack. Kentaro dashed forward and cut down Minhyuk with his Cutting Hay skill.

Fwoosh—

Blood spurted out of Minhyuk's body as his HP fell below 50%. Then, Alexander's sword fell down like a meteorite and struck Minhyuk.

“Sword of Destruction.”

Baaaaaaaaang—

Minhyuk vomited a mouthful of blood as his body got embedded deep into the ground. But just when the other rankers were about to attack him...

Like the Wind.?

Minhyuk stumbled forward, triggering his skill to evade their attacks. As Calauhel watched Minhyuk stagger forward, he shouted furiously, “You will face your defeat here! South Korea will be trampled by us!”

That seemed to be an undeniable reality soon.

“A prideful and moronic bastard! Do you think you can sit on the Supreme Throne by doing this?!!!”

Yes. The kings applauded South Korea and Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's tactics here. However, they still had a lot of hidden trump cards under their sleeves. No matter what happened, South Korea's fall here would be inevitable.

Sadly, this was a fact that both Minhyuk and the other Korean rankers knew. They knew that they would never be able to sit on the Supreme Throne. But did that mean that they have to give up that quickly? No. That was absolutely impossible.

A 200,000-strong army? Yes, the enemies had not called in all of their troops yet. If they truly called in for all of their troops, then their total would reach almost a million. If the enemies really launched an all-out attack, then the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and the entire South Korean troops would disappear without a trace.

However, for someone that already knew that they would lose, it would be more stupid to just give up and stop trying. This was Minhyuk's reason. This was his motivation and driving force.

Then, Minhyuk took out a parchment and tore it apart. This parchment was one of the items that he had received in the ‘Battle of the Thrones’ as a special privilege and it could increase the skill abilities by 1.5x. It was a very valuable item and only one parchment had been released. It even made Minhyuk wonder if he would be able to get more in the future.

[The Overlord's Mana has reached 100%!]

“Summon Beanie.”

“Oiiiiiiiink!”

“Overlord’s Technique.”

[The Overlord’s Fire, with an additional 3,000%~4,000% attack, will attack everyone within a 40~60 meter radius.]

[The Overlord’s Fire is a fire that will not be extinguished so easily. If the fire licks and touches a body, it will continue to deal damage to that individual.]

[The power of the parchment is now in effect. The skill’s effect has become 1.5x stronger.]

A huge wave of fire appeared, crackling fiercely and licking the ground to devour the huge army and the kings in Minhyuk’s path. Right after Minhyuk cast the skill, another Overlord’s Technique was unleashed from Beanie’s small kitchen knife, moving to devour the world.

Just like they said, our South Korea will be defeated. However, even if we are going to be defeated, those that fought together with me today will be legends.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!!!

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!!!

Chapter 576: Battle of the Thrones (Bottom)

It did not matter to everyone inside the walls of the castle, which was now covered by a thick steel armor, how Minhyuk obtained the Food God’s Absolute God’s Secret: Everyone’s Happiness. What mattered to them right now was the fact that he charged forward alone.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Thud, thud, thud!

Everyone could hear explosions going off outside constantly.

“...Thank you.”

“It’s my honor to fight with you.”

“You have my respect.”

Whenever an explosion rang loudly, the rankers would think of *him*, who was fighting alone outside the walls. Even if this was a game, it was still scary to think that one would face more than 200,000 enemies by themselves, right? But after using this unbelievably OP AOE skill, Minhyuk still chose to jump alone and fight against the enemy.

Many of the rankers present here had either ridiculed, mocked, rebuked or condemned the Food God before. That was how people were. If they thought someone was better than them, they would definitely scrutinize and mock that person. However, today, these rankers came to realize why the Food God became a king and why he was hailed as the best ranker in the world.

Genie said, “He’s cool, right?”

“...He’s cool.”

“He’s amazing.”

Genie smiled softly. The rankers all turned to focus on her as she opened her mouth. Whatever she said right now would definitely leave a huge imprint in their hearts forever. She said, "Do you want to join Beyond the Heavens?"

"..."

"..."

"..."

'No. Why did you suddenly destroy this touching moment? Is this how you recruit people into your guild? But... why do I feel the strong desire to join you?'

Genie's eyes sparkled. She could tell that many rankers would flock to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom from this point on! Then, she turned to look at the still warm steak in her hands. Everyone was busy trying to gobble up the food in their hands. Just like them, she placed a piece of cube steak in her mouth.

A gentle smile curled up at the corner of Genie's lips the moment the cube steak entered her mouth. The rich and savory flavor of the steak was evident in just one bite; the more she chewed, the more juices came out of the steak. Then, Genie took out a can of cider from her inventory and gulped it down.

After seeing her, many of the rankers suddenly started asking...

"Do any of you have some cans of cider?"

"I don't have one either?"

"Why do all of the members of Beyond the Heavens have cans of cider with them? Huh, someone also has a cola with them."

"Why is Locke suddenly drinking alcohol on his own...?"

"Strangely enough, Locke's back looks similar to my dad whenever he drinks soju while eating dried anchovies..."

This was the influence of the Food God! Because of Minhyuk, the members of Beyond the Heavens started to carry cans of cider and canned beers with them at all times. This way, they would be able to enjoy Minhyuk's delicious dishes better, anywhere, anytime.

"Kgghk..." Genie let out a sigh of admiration after drinking her cider. This time, she stretched her fork toward the well-grilled King Oyster Mushrooms, which was immediately followed by the well-mixed potato salad. Just as she had expected, Minhyuk's cooking was still the best of the best.

However, both Genie and the Korean rankers thought that it was virtually impossible for all of the dishes that Minhyuk gave to all the rankers here to eat would be excellent.

"Eyy. No matter what happens, this is the Food God's dish. It probably has a buff that can increase our powers by 10%."

“Right, yeah.”

The dish created by ‘Everyone’s Happiness’ did not have an explanation. It seemed like they would only be able to confirm the effects after eating the dish themselves.

But then, Twilight Chef Black suddenly retorted, “You’re talking nonsense.”

Twilight Chef Black was Korea’s best chef and was ranked third in Athenae’s global chef rankings.

“The higher the level the chef has, the more cooking skills they will learn. A typical example of a skill that they could learn is the skill ‘Cooking Together’.”

Cooking Together was a skill that chefs over Level 400 were able to learn. Just like Everyone’s Happiness, Cooking Together was a skill that would allow many people to get the buff effects of a single dish.

“The problem is that the more the number of people eating the dish increases, the less the buff effect in the dish. If you feed three people together, you will get a 20% decrease in the effects. If you feed ten people, you will get a 40% decrease in the effects. If you feed twenty people, the buff effect that one will be able to receive will only be at 50%. So, what do you think will happen in our situation?” Twilight Chef Black said, his eyes looking at the people around him. There were around 10,000 surviving rankers present. Then, he continued, “It would be a miracle if our stats go up by even 3% at this point.”

“The Food God’s dishes always exceeded our expectations,” Genie said, a wry smile on her face. She knew that Black was one of the few people that loathed Minhyuk. He was also a very horrible realist.

“The 10,000 dishes that appeared is nothing more than an outstanding performance. Do you think it’s reasonable to get the same buff effect for 10,000 people with just a single dish?”

Twilight Chef Black was obviously speaking up because he hated Minhyuk to the bone. However, the rankers that came to respect Minhyuk also had to admit that it was truly something impossible.

“There are things in this world that can easily defy common sense.”

However, Genie thought differently. In the first place, she was aware that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had never planned for such a performance. Also, she could tell that there was a reason why Food God Minhyuk decided to make them eat this dish.

But Twilight Chef Black just snorted at her, “Don’t try to protect your king. These facts will be proven soon.”

“Then, what if the buff effect exceeds 10%?”

“Hahahahahahahahaha!” Black’s laughter rang loudly in the area. That was virtually impossible. No, it was something that definitely did not make any sense.

That was why he confidently said, “Then, I’ll join Beyond the Heavens. Of course, that won’t happen even if I die at this moment and wake up outside. Well then, shall we? I only have one piece left after all.”

Black stabbed his fork on the final piece of cube steak on his plate. Genie’s eyes narrowed into slits, her expression turning into that of someone that found the situation to be fun, “Out of all the 10,000 people here, you are the one that ate the fastest. Strange, even though you vehemently denied this dish. Huh?”

“...”

Yes. He could not deny that. The cube steak was so delicious that Black could not find any faults with it. As a chef, he had no choice but to acknowledge the flavor of this dish, and unknowingly ate everything in a hurry. To save himself from further embarrassment, Black placed the last piece in his mouth and savored it mockingly, “Mmhmm~~ The taste is definitely acceptable. But, what about the buffs, huh?”

Then, the notifications rang in his ears.

[Everyone’s Happiness.]

[You have eaten the Cube Steak. Everyone will be able to experience the same effects and flavor of this one single dish.]

[Your HP has recovered by 45%.]

[Your MP has recovered by 51%.]

[Your Stamina has recovered by a considerable amount.]

[All of your stats will increase by 19%.]

[Your physical and magical attack will increase by 18%.]

[Your physical and magical defense will increase by 17%.]

[All of your skill’s level will increase by +1.]

Clatter—

Twilight Chef Black’s fork clattered on the ground. At the same time, Genie placed the last piece of her cube steak in her mouth, smiled and said, “You have to join Beyond the Heavens, no? Ah. I don’t know if Minhyuk will accept you, though?”

“...”

Genie, with a satisfied smile on her face, emphasized, “Take. Good. Care. Of. Us. Once. Again.”

“...”

A new member had been recruited in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!

“Overlord’s Technique.”

Alexander, the strongest ranker in the world, sensed an unusual energy coming from the flames that shot out from Minhyuk's sword and licked the ground as they stretched toward the kings.

Beanie, the baby piggy, appeared behind Minhyuk. He immediately sent a huge wave of flames toward the large army and the kings upon his summoning.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The kings watched in terror as the rankers, which were only barely grazed by the flames, turned to ash that scattered in the wind. They felt like they had witnessed the drop of a nuclear bomb after seeing the shocking scene. Only 0.1 seconds had passed yet thousands of rankers had already turned to ashes.

While Alexander was brought into a daze by the horrifying scene in front of him, Italy's Valentino, the global number one tanker, swiftly slammed his square shield on the ground and shouted, “God of Shield's Wall!!!”

Rumbleee—

A twenty meter transparent shield appeared in front of them in an instant.

Crackle—

Not long after, the wave of flames collided with the God of Shield's Wall. Hell on earth was unfolding from behind that transparent wall. But after a few seconds, the God of Shield's Wall...

Crackle, rumble—

...began to melt. The fire devoured and melted the walls and finally stretched its claws toward the kings.

“Keuhoooooooook!”

“Aaaaaaaaaack!”

“Urghhhhhh!”

Alexander stood among them in abject terror as the scales of a dragon popped out from his full-plate armor and covered his entire body. This was Alexander's armor's function, a function that could triple his defense in a moment's notice. But Alexander was unable to get back to his senses and pull himself out of the flames.

[Your HP has fallen below 60%!]

[Your HP has fallen below 55%!]

Only after hearing the notifications did Alexander hurriedly take out a bottle of potion and drank its contents. But the shock did not end there. When the flames finally died down, they saw baby piggy Beanie step forward from behind Minhyuk. Then, Beanie unleashed another wave of flames.

“This is a catastrophe...”

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The kings found it hard to withstand the blazing flames as it stretched forward and devoured them once again. Beanie’s Predator’s Authority did not copy a skill as it was. It was a skill that copied the power of the skill that had been cast. In other words, another Overlord’s Technique, with 100% Overlord’s Mana and a 1.5x stronger power, was cast once again.

Only after Alexander had struggled to stand up after stumbling on his feet did he see the state of their troops. In just that short instant, 60,000 of their troops disappeared without a trace. The worst part? The flames were still continuously gnawing at their troops. Alexander looked to his side and saw Master Archer Miao slowly getting on her feet, her body covered in different degrees of burns. Some distance away, he saw Calauhel, with one arm missing, struggling to stand up. The mask that hid Kentaro’s face had been melted by the fire, even his armor had been burnt to a crisp and exposed his skin. All of the kings looked horrible as they tried to prop up their battered bodies.

Just when Minhyuk was about to move...

“Guided Explosion.”

Miao, who hurriedly nocked a white arrow on her bow with her trembling hands, fired a shot toward Minhyuk.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

“Ughh!”

Minhyuk staggered back.

Everyone was aware that they had to kill this man in front of them before he could even utter a word or wield his sword. This man in front of them was like a ‘monster’, a ‘god’. For the first time, they felt fear creeping up on their spine as they looked at the man in front of them. Before this crippling fear could consume them, they had to stop him now. They could not let him do anything. They have to give it their all to kill this man.

Kentaro’s katanas flashed, “Splitting Tempest.”

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A tremendous force stretched out to cut down Minhyuk.

“Sword’s Tomb.”

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

Eight sword blades fell down on Minhyuk as Calauhel unleashed his attack.

“Shield Explosion.”

Dozens of square shields flew toward Minhyuk and triggered a series of explosions. All of the kings looked like they were possessed by something as they hurriedly attacked Minhyuk. This was because of ‘fear’.

Despite a thick cloud of dust covering their sight, the kings continued to unleash their attacks until they finally saw Minhyuk's silhouette fall down. But at that moment, an unknown silhouette appeared and gently hugged Minhyuk's own silhouette. With the appearance of the unknown silhouette, a series of notifications rang in everyone's ears.

[One of the Absolute Gods is writing the final arc to the story of the king and his retainer.]

Golden characters appeared in the air, retelling the story of the king and his retainer.

[The king gave it his all to make a dish that will be delivered to his retainer.]

[The retainer cut down everything blocking his path, even the gods, to rush back to his king's arms.]

[The king and his retainer, both men that always remembered each other in their hearts, finally met again on the battlefield.]

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The thick cloud of dust finally settled. And in front of the kings stood Minhyuk supported by an old man, who was smiling gently at his king. And despite the blood covering his entire body, Minhyuk was also smiling gently at the old man.

[The king and his retainer looked at each other with fond and bright smiles on each other's faces.]

[The story of the king and his retainer's separation and reunion finally ends here.]

[And...]

On the skies, the huge golden characters, bigger than the ones before, appeared. Even the kings could not take their eyes off of the sheer beauty of the golden characters floating in the skies.

[The new legend of the king and his retainer has now begun.]

Chapter 577: Battle of the Thrones (Bottom)

The NPCs in the virtual reality game were artificial intelligences created by Supercomputer Athenae and the company's production team. In fact, most people think that they were just simple artificial intelligence, while some think and treat these artificial intelligences as if they were people too.

But no matter their stance, one incident had greatly changed their views on NPCs. It was none other than the incident that happened during a live broadcast, where Ghost Spear Ben charged through tens of thousands of enemy troops just to save Luna and Haze. Many people were also impressed when Minhyuk honored Ghost Spear Ben, instead of rejoicing and enjoying their victory after the war with Lumae Kingdom, the Warrior's Nation, and the dragons. In the end, Ghost Spear Ben still died.

However, no one could deny that it was a glorious death.

After witnessing Ben's death, some felt bitter while some lost sleep. They went through the same grief as if they had lost someone very, very precious to them. Some with stronger emotions and sympathy even ended up crying while they watched the broadcast.

And now, a shocking notification rang in the entire world.

[The new legend of the king and his retainer has now begun.]

Many of the viewers from all over the world trembled, their hearts thumping loudly in their chests.

The one that returned to protect his king.

The one that remembered and waited for his retainer.

The retainer supported his king with a gentle smile on his face. While the king looked at him and smiled brightly, his expression filled with his overwhelming faith in his retainer.

‘I also want to have a king and a retainer like that.’

A new dream unfolded for many of those that watched the scene. And Minhyuk and Ben? Both men were very delighted. For Minhyuk, Ben was like a grandfather, an old friend, and a reliable comrade in the battlefield. For Ben, Minhyuk was like his son, a childish and innocent king, a true and genuine saint, and a person that he had to protect. The two of them smiled at each other. Minhyuk looked quite haggard now, but no one would say that he looked terrible like that. In fact, the scene was beautiful and cool, to the point that the kings had forgotten what they intended to do and stopped attacking them.

Ben, who supported Minhyuk’s trembling arm that was slung over his shoulder, said, “Your Majesty, please hold on tight,” as he immediately used ‘Ghost Steps’. In just a blink, the two people disappeared in front of the kings.

“Over there!!!”

The two of them appeared in the skies above them. Ben used his Ghost Steps one after the other, blinking away from the crowd of enemies and heading toward the other side of the bridge. The image of the retainer supporting his king as they escaped was both a beautiful and spectacular sight!

However, for some, this sight invoked something completely different.

“Aaaaaaaah...! A beautiful love story between the king and his retainer! I’m overflowing with inspiration! An old man! A muscular, sweaty old man, and a young king!”

“...”

“...”

“...”

The dry well of inspiration finally filled up and overflowed again after a long time for the Best Selling Author Aruvel. Leaving that behind, Minhyuk and Ben were able to safely arrive inside the gates. Meanwhile, the kings and the enemy troops were charging fiercely on the bridge as they tried to catch up to them.

Fwiiiiiiish—

Minhyuk hurriedly took out a chocobar and ate it with relish. Thanks to his ‘Absorption Conversion’ skill, he was able to recover around 32% of his HP. However, his body was still weak and shaking.

The kings had received tremendous damage from the Overlord’s Technique earlier, but all of them still believed that it would not be too hard to deal with Minhyuk, before and now. As long as they used more of their skills, then Minhyuk would finally die.

Thump—

But then, Spear God Ben stood beside Minhyuk. The spear tied with a red cloth finally returned to 'him'. After receiving his spear, Spear God Ben slammed it on the ground.

Clank—

The kings believed that it would be easy to kill Minhyuk. However, Spear God Ben, who was standing next to him, was a problem. And...

'For some reason, it's making me feel like I'm facing a huge mountain.'

'They're just two people but why am I feeling scared?'

The kings felt a huge pressure on them just from the two men alone, who were standing with their backs toward the castle covered with thick steel armor. When the kings were just thirty meters away from them...

Rumbleeeeeeee—

The steel armor slowly unfurled, the huge gates opening with a loud rumble. As if on cue, the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, who had recovered from their injuries, began to step out from deep inside the castle.

Beyond the Heavens' Vice Guild Master Genie.

Master of the Fist Khan and Master of Kicks Ares.

Divine Beast Master Kaistra and self-proclaimed Fire Fist Ace.

The tall, gigantic Elpis and Kimaris.

Sword Saint Conir and Bestselling Author Aruvel.

Informant Abel and Moon Assassin Lucia.

Knight of Agony Alicia, and Great Pirate Gorfido with his Ten Thousand Chain in one hand and Ten Thousand Sword in the other.

And up in the skies flew the four legendary dragons and Dragon Monarch Black Dragon.

As well as the 10,000 surviving Korean rankers.

'All of them were on the brink of death just a few moments ago...'

Alexander could not understand what was happening. These people had obviously lost their will to fight and were already on the brink of death before. But now, their eyes were glinting sharply, and a strange sense of confidence was oozing from their bodies. More than 10,000 dishes appeared together with the Food God; each and every single one of those dishes were supposed to have buff effects. But that was something impossible. So, all of the kings denied it. Just like how Twilight Chef Black had denied it earlier, they were also denying it. After all, it just did not make sense.

Alexander remained at the vanguard as they charged forward, inching ever so closely to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. On the other side, Minhyuk grabbed the hilt of his sword with both of his hands and slowly moved forward, his speed gradually increasing until he was at a full run.

"Let's go!!!"

“Uwoooooooooooo!!!”

“Woaaaaaah!!!”

Minhyuk was at the forefront with Spear God Ben following right behind him, as a new word appeared right on the blade of his sword.

“Gather.”

This was the Absolute God’s Secret: Lightning’s active skill that combined all of the advantages of Explosion, Destruction and Crazy!

[Gather.]

[The skill will be triggered with a 100% chance of gaining an additional 4,000% attack.]

[You have a 40% chance of triggering four to eight times of bloody lightning rain with 2,000% attack that will indiscriminately attack anyone within a 30 meter radius of your target.]

[There’s a 10% chance of the bloody lightning rain exploding with an additional 2,000% attack.]

[The skill will last for four minutes.]

At that moment, a bright golden aura appeared and covered not only Minhyuk’s sword, but also his body. Of course, Minhyuk did not cast Gather alone, he also used another buff skill. This buff skill was none other than ‘Ellie’s Swordsmanship’.

Minhyuk jumped up in the skies, causing the kings to be in a momentary daze after seeing his fluttering red cape and gold aura. But Alexander was different. As the one in the vanguard, he immediately raised his sword to block whatever attack was coming his way. At the same time, Minhyuk fell, unleashing a catastrophe not on Alexander, but on the rankers that were running beside him.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The moment Minhyuk landed, a disaster in the form of a sword attack with 100% probability of hitting with a 4,000% attack swept away his enemies.

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

It was immediately followed by lightning strikes that covered an entire thirty meter radius and indiscriminately attacked everyone within range, causing 2,000% damage.

Rumble—

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

Just one swing of Minhyuk’s sword and the impact was already enough to sweep away the kings. On top of that, Minhyuk also had a 40% chance of triggering the lightning strikes four to eight times in a row.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

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

Rumbleeeee—

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

“Keheooooook!”

“Aaaaaaack!”

In just an instant, the kings that ran with Alexander were all forced to take a step back, their bodies staggering from the impact of the attack. As for those that were not kings? The ordinary rankers died without leaving a trace.

“...What the hell? How far have you gone?!!!”

“Minhyuuuuuk!”

Alexander and Kentaro were both furious after witnessing how Minhyuk could overturn the heavens and the earth and make the ground cry and shake with just one swing of his sword. Feelings of shock and anger flowed through their veins, together with a hint of pure admiration.

The moment Minhyuk passed by them, a rain of lightning bolts fell down from the skies.

Rumbleeeee—

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack!

Rumbleeeee—

Minhyuk decided to deal with the rankers and not the kings. This was because Gather mode would be able to display its effects best when fighting against a huge number of people.

Rumbleeeee—

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

Hundreds of rankers died with every swing of Minhyuk’s sword. On top of that...

‘Like the Wind.’

Minhyuk used his skills expertly, as he weaved through the large army and dug through their gaps. On top of that, Minhyuk could swing his sword more than five times in a few seconds. In that short amount of time, more than 500 rankers turned into ashes and disappeared.

‘Minhyuk is definitely strong. But I can deal with the people in front of me. Some of the kings should go and stop the rankers, while the other kings should go and keep Minhyuk in check.’

This was what Alexander decided, and the same was true for the others. But just when Alexander was about to step forward to restrain Minhyuk...

Baaaaaaang—

A Shadowless Spear fell down from the skies and attacked Alexander, forcing a groan out of his mouth, “Ughhh!”

The one that attacked Alexander was none other than Spear God Ben.

“Your opponent will be me, boy.”

“...Your power has weakened.”

Alexander smiled silently. He could tell from the blow that Spear God Ben's power had weakened. Spear God Ben had received the buff effect from the Absolute God grade 'spicy braised chicken' that Minhyuk made for him when he first appeared. During the entire duration of the buff, Ben was able to exert a stronger power. However, his stamina was consumed greatly. On the other hand, although the cube steak's buff effects had significantly lowered his power, his stamina would be able to be maintained longer.

“I may be old but do you really think you can block me?”

“...Urk!”

Alexander's expression turned ugly. The old man was saying that he would only be able to block him? Alexander was indignant, the old man was an opponent that he should be able to disregard at will. However, he still took a step back and decided to wait for the other kings to join him. After all, the members of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were no match against the kings. But...

Baaaaaaaang—

“...???”

Alexander blinked blankly as someone rolled over to him after being sent flying from an attack. It was none other than 'Infighter Anton'.

“...”

Alexander turned to look at the direction where Anton came from, only to see Khan and Ares cracking and loosening their joints. The people that Anton was trampling on earlier were now looking down at him haughtily.

‘What's this? Is Anton growing tired...’

But before he could even finish his thoughts, a scream rang loudly somewhere.

“Kyaaaack!”

Alexander hurriedly turned to look at the direction of the sound. What greeted him was the sight of an arrow piercing through Master Archer Miao's chest. When he followed the direction where the arrow came from, he saw the figure of South Korea's Master Archer, Root.

Spear God Ben looked at him with a smirk on his face and said, “You know, His Majesty's dishes are delicious.”

“...!”

Only then did Alexander realize something, *‘No way...!’*

Did all of them become stronger? Alexander wanted to deny the truth. That was something impossible! It did not make sense at all. However, the charging Korean rankers were clearly different from before. From what it looked like, they were at least 20% stronger.

Now, the rankers of the great army were being mercilessly slaughtered because they could not handle the 10,000 Korean rankers. Just an additional 20% in power when it came to rankers could bring about such ridiculous results and turn the tide.

Seeing this, Alexander immediately made a decision, "Call half of the troops from the castle right now!"

The things that Alexander thought of, the other kings also thought of. All of them immediately called for their troops.

'It's a fight that we will inevitably win but...' Alexander thought as he bit his lips tightly.

Their enemies were greatly outnumbered. Even if each of them just sent half of their troops over, they would probably reach more than 500,000 in numbers. It was a number that a mere 10,000 could not fight against.

Alexander continued to struggle against Ben. When he got knocked back by one of Ben's spears, he turned to look back and...

"Crazy...!"

...saw a man standing among the ashes of their tens of thousands of troops. His figure, coupled with his red cape fluttering behind him that bore the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together, looked noble and mighty. Seeing this, Alexander could hardly deny the desire to be by this man's side that sprouted in his head at this very moment.

After wiping out the rest of the troops, Minhyuk immediately turned around to join his army and face the kings.

Baaaaaaaang—

However, one of the rankers, who was still alive after the onslaught of attacks that Minhyuk unleashed, sent a fire-attribute magical attack toward his back.

"Ugh!"

As Minhyuk stumbled, one of the people that saw his predicament rushed forward and helped him up.

"Are you alright?"

"...???"

Minhyuk looked up at the man in confusion. The smile on his face was obviously different from the look that he usually gave Minhyuk. This man's name was none other than Twilight Chef Black. From what it looked like, Black was just fighting against his opponent with a trident earlier. However, he hurriedly rushed to Minhyuk's aid, helping him stand up and even patting the dust on Minhyuk's back and butt.

“You have to be careful,” Twilight Chef Black continued, “Please let me join Beyond the Heavens. Haha!”

Twilight Chef Black had often made trouble for Minhyuk. Even Minhyuk was aware of this fact. So, in response to his words, Minhyuk’s expression turned ugly. It was that expression! The expression that one would make whenever they saw the person that they really hated! Minhyuk’s expression twisted into that expression.

Meanwhile, Black believed that the Beyond the Heavens’ King would definitely accept him. After all, who would turn down the request of a talent like him, right?

“You’ll accept me, right?”

Minhyuk, whose expression was filled with disgust, replied with a short but firm answer, “It’s on hold.”

Black’s face turned ugly. Who was he? He was one of the top ten chefs in the world!

“Why...? Take me in! Food God!!! Take me...!”

Minhyuk, who turned around, thought, ‘*Has he gone nuts...?*’

That was right. As someone that was unaware of the bet between Black and Genie, Minhyuk could only think of the man as ‘crazy’.

Chapter 578: Battle of the Thrones (Bottom)

The kings that wanted to sweep Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and the South Korean rankers first before they proceeded with the Battle of the Thrones were all left flustered.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

Infighter Anton was sent flying up in the air after receiving an attack from Ares, which was immediately followed by Khan, who punched him down to the ground.

“Giant’s Downward Strike!!!”

Baaaaaaaaaam—

Right next to Khan and Ares was Elpis, one of the strongest, charging toward their enemies. The only reason why Lesser Demon Elpis was having a hard time fighting against the other kings was because the kings’ powers had become 1.5x stronger. Assuming the kings were initially at Level 600, with the special privilege of 1.5x strength, they were able to exert the power of someone at Level 900 during the entire duration of the Battle of the Thrones.

But thanks to the buff effects of the dish that Minhyuk made for them, Elpis had now become 30% stronger.

Thuuuud—

Elpis grabbed Kentaro, who was trying to escape with a *poof*—, by the collar and slammed him on the ground.

“Urk!”

On the other side, a tremendous vibration shook the ground beneath Disaster Qigong Master Demetrus, as the young boy Conir and the Divine Beast Owner Kaistra pushed him back with their fierce attack and momentum.

Boooooooooom—

Demetrus tried to manipulate the energy in the air and restrain them, but it was useless. Kaistra and Penrus charged forward, with Kaistra swinging his spear and Penrus snapping his huge teeth and swiping his sharp claws at Demetrus. Of course, the young boy, Conir, was not to be outdone, as he swung his sword and displayed his outstanding swordsmanship.

But the bigger problem that the kings faced was the 10,000 rankers running behind them.

“Fire Sword!”

“Summon Spirit! Undine!!!”

“Great Shield!”

“Fire Wall!!!”

After becoming 30% stronger, the rankers were now able to exert the power of someone at around the Level 700 range. Normally, this would not be a problem for them since they were stronger, but the problem here was that there were around 10,000 of such rankers. On top of that...

Baaaaaaaaang—

“Urghhh!”

...Minhyuk joined the battle against them after wiping out the rest of the large army. He sent Calauhel flying back with one of his attacks as he dashed forward and cast his ‘Sword of Frenzy’ toward Master Archer Miao, who was under the onslaught of Root’s arrows. A tremendous force erupted within Miao’s body the moment Minhyuk’s sword stabbed one of her vital points.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

“Kyaaaaaaack!” Miao screamed, her body collapsing in a heap.

Minhyuk also took advantage of the ‘Reflector Master’, attacking Xu Jiaqi in her flanks while she was busy reflecting the attacks of the rankers in front of her.

“Food God...!”

Xu Jiaqi and Minhyuk had already clashed once when she drove Ellie to her ‘death’ before. When Xu Jiaqi saw Minhyuk gearing up for another attack, she hurriedly cast her ‘Miracle Reflection’ to ward it off.

Miracle Reflection was a skill that Xu Jiaqi recently gained. With this skill, she would be able to reflect 100% of the attacks with 100% of their damage in one minute. However, in return, the skill user would also receive damage. However, that did not matter, especially since Xu Jiaqi was considered to be the strongest ranker and China’s king. Furthermore, Xu Jiaqi’s HP was high.

Minhyuk used Sword of Tempest against Xu Jiaqi.

Rumbleeeeeeee—

Sword of Tempest was a skill that could unleash hundreds of blades with 250% speed and indiscriminately slaughter everyone within the radius of attack for six straight seconds! In just a few short seconds, Minhyuk would be able to deal dozens, if not hundreds, of attacks to his enemies.

“Moron! If you use that skill, then you will also... Kyaaaaaack!”

Rumbleeeeeeee—

Hundreds of blades slashed China’s King, Xu Jiaqi, blood spurting out from each and every cut. The same wounds and injuries appeared on Minhyuk’s body. However, Minhyuk just ignored them.

‘*What...?!?*’ Xu Jiaqi could not understand the situation.

In the end, the one whose HP reached zero was Xu Jiaqi; she was the one that died. Yes, Xu Jiaqi had a high HP volume. However, Minhyuk’s stats were far higher than any of the ordinary rankers’ stats. No matter how high Reflector Master Xu Jiaqi’s HP was, it was only slightly higher than a mage or an assassin. Minhyuk was just a ‘chef’, but his HP had improved tremendously thanks to the skill that he had in the past where he could increase his stats just by eating alone.

Swooooooosh—

Finally, one of the kings had disappeared, triggering the notifications that signaled Xu Jiaqi’s death.

[Verrado Kingdom’s King has perished!]

[Verrado Kingdom has started to shake!]

[The kingdom that hunted Verrado Kingdom’s King has earned a high amount of contribution.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The notifications came as a huge shock to the kings especially because they never expected that any of the participating people that wanted to push out South Korea and Beyond the Heavens Kingdom first would die. But not long after...

[Alveir Kingdom’s King has perished!]

[Alveir Kingdom has started to shake!]

[The kingdom that hunted Alveir Kingdom’s King has earned a high amount of contribution.]

...Calauhel perished.

‘*This...*’

Alexander’s face turned ugly. At the same time, Spear God Ben’s fierce and unrelenting spear continued to thrust at his body and aim at his weak spots.

'If things continue at this rate, then we will all be in danger.'

Alexander looked around. Their enemy was just one country, one out of the 28 participating countries. And these people were facing 27 of the top ranking kings in the world. However, this small country managed to kill two of the kings as they continued to struggle against them.

In the end, Alexander was forced to give an order that would shock the entire world, "Retreat."

"...!"

"...!"

"What...?!"

"Alexander!"

All of the kings protested. This would be a smear in their names, a disgrace that they should never had to carry! Especially since they had received the support of their country's government in this Battle of the Thrones. But Alexander was telling them, the pride of their own countries, to retreat right now.

"We have to retreat," Kentaro nodded and agreed, "More kings will die at this rate if we continue to stay here. Ah, but if you want to stay, then feel free to do so."

"..."

"..."

The kings had to choose. Should they escape or should they remain here, let their ranks collapse and suffer more casualties? It was a matter of choosing whether they should die, or protect their lives but swallow their pride.

But then, Alexander drove his point deeper home, "Our 500,000-strong troops are already advancing here. Our job here is done. We have been defeated by Beyond the Heavens Kingdom."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

No, the truth was Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would be wiped out soon. However, none of the kings present could deny Alexander's declaration of their defeat. The fact that they were struggling so much against these few people was already a mark in the book of defeat. In the end, they chose to retreat, rushing out as they left behind the 10,000 Korean rankers.

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

The members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and the surviving Korean rankers all shouted loudly, their voices ringing clearly in the ears of everyone watching from all over the world. Even the commentators could not believe the sudden turn of events.

[This is very surprising. The 25 surviving kings are fleeing.]

[This is something that none of us expected. The strongest and greatest people in the world are running away from one small country.]

[This will forever be a humiliation to the kings from all over the world. Once all of the servers have been integrated, no country will think that Asgan Continent is easy to deal with.]

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!”

The shouting and screaming Korean rankers had a lot of thoughts flying in their heads during this battle.

‘I thought that it was impossible to survive throughout this day.’

‘I thought that South Korea would easily collapse.’

‘We did it.’

‘It was only possible because of Genie, Khan, Locke, Carr and the Beyond the Heavens King’ Food God.’

‘I want to go to Beyond the Heavens too.’

Many had started to dream of joining Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Boom, boom, boom, booom—

Not long after, a steady and loud beating of the drum resounded in the area. In front of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s castle stood the 25 kings that fled, followed by their 500,000 strong troops. All of the kings were seen gritting their teeth. It seemed like they were trying hard to erase the disgrace that they suffered just a few moments prior, with the majesty of their 500,000-strong troops.

However, none of the South Korean rankers nor the members of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were afraid of them.

“Fight until the very end.”

Shiiiiiiiiing—

Shiiiiiiiiing—

Shiiiiiiiiing—

Shiiiiiiiiing—

Minhyuk announced the start of their final battle by pulling his sword out of its sheath. Among them stood Allein, the Spear Knight that willingly became a new member of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. She thought, *‘I’m not afraid because I am fighting with you,’* as she ran together with the guild members of Beyond the Heavens and charged toward the 500,000 enemy troops.

And on this day...

[Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s King has perished.]

[Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's King Statue has collapsed!]

[Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's troops have been wiped out.]

[Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is recorded as the first country to be destroyed.]

South Korea ranked last in the actual rankings of the Battle of the Thrones. However, the 10,000 of them were able to kill 230,000 of the 500,000 troops that came to wipe them out. And in terms of the contribution rankings...

...they had completely crushed America, the country that took the Supreme Throne. But the Battle of the Thrones was not yet over. President Kang Taehoon announced...

[Dear players, if you access Athenae right now, you will be able to enter the 'King's Banquet' server. This server will allow you to access the castle of the king that you wish to meet. You are free to meet the kings and congratulate them in person.]

Anyone, no matter their country or nationality, would be able to congratulate the king that they wanted to congratulate by accessing the ceremonial hall where the kings that participated in the Battle of the Thrones are currently located. Just like that, hundreds of millions of players immediately moved to access the game.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk left his capsule after terminating his access to Athenae, a bitter smile on his face as he said, "I lost in the end, Dad."

"Sometimes experiencing defeat is more meaningful than gaining victory," Minhyuk's father, Kang Minhoo, smiled softly at him.

Minhyuk sighed. After his participation in the Battle of the Thrones had ended, he went for a meeting with Joy Co. Ltd. to talk about the 'King's Banquet' and meet with the ordinary players. Minhyuk already predicted that more than 90% of the people would go to see Alexander, the one sitting on the Supreme Throne.

After he freshened himself up in the bathroom, Minhyuk accessed the game again. He thought, *'Let's not look so dispirited! I have to do my best for the people that will be coming to see me.'*

Although Alexander would receive most of the spotlight, Minhyuk believed that he did well himself. There was nothing he could do about that. Even though his shoulders were drooping from the thought, Minhyuk still tried to comfort himself as he went back inside his capsule.

Alexander sat on the 'Supreme Throne', a throne shining with a golden light. However, there was a bitter smile hanging on his face as he looked at the tens of millions of people that were cheering for his victory.

The reason for his bitter smile? It was all because of the call that he received from Joy Co. Ltd. before he accessed the game again. From what he heard, more than 500 million people had accessed the King's Banquet Server. However, only tens of millions of people came to see him.

'I won't lose next time, Minhyuk,' Alexander smiled bitterly.

A person's heart was very complicated.

'It's alright, I'm proud of myself for doing well enough in this event.'

That was the thought that flashed in Minhyuk's head. However, he still could not help but feel sorry for himself as envy toward Alexander flared up in his heart. Minhyuk wondered if he was already listening to the people's enthusiastic cheers, a crowd that was larger than any of the crowd's present in the kings of the other countries.

After accessing Athenae once again, Minhyuk reappeared in the castle that he was in earlier. The castle and all of its facilities had already been repaired. The bitter smile continued to hang on the corners of Minhyuk's lips as he thought, *'Just like expected, huh?'*

Minhyuk could not hear any shouts or even voices from where he was. At this moment, he was already sure that most of the people came to see the Supreme Throne.

Then, Genie, who had accessed the game much earlier than him, appeared and said, "Minhyuk, let's go?"

"Yeah."

"Why do you look a bit disappointed?"

"What do you mean by disappointed? I'm not. I just think that it's a bit of a pity," Minhyuk said bitterly.

Genie walked by his side and consoled him, "You did well enough, Minhyuk."

"We did great but we still came in last place~"

"Hmm..."

Genie knew that Minhyuk was saying this as a joke but she could tell that there was a huge weight on the man's shoulders. He looked like he was very sad to have disappointed the people's expectations of him. The two people walked together, their steps bringing them closer and closer to the walls.

"Minhyuk."

"Huh?"

"You are the best king. And many people believe this to be the case."

"...Right. It would be nice if they think so," Minhyuk said, the bitter smile on his face getting deeper by the second.

The corners of Genie's lips curled up into a bright smile as she grabbed the handle of the door and said, "Ready?"

"Huh?"

"Are you ready to sit on the true 'Supreme Throne', the throne that the entire world is cheering for?"

At that moment...

Creaaaaaaaak—

...Genie twisted the handle and opened the door wide to present to Minhyuk the view outside of the walls of the castle.

What greeted Minhyuk was a huge crowd, huge enough to cover the entire area. There were so many people present that not a hint of the ground that they were standing on could be seen from above. According to Joy Co. Ltd., the total number of players that appeared in Minhyuk's castle have reached an astounding 340 million.

Minhyuk stepped forward, confusion evident on his face.

“Woaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Beyond the Heavens! Beyond the Heavens! Beyond the Heavens! Beyond the Heavens!”

“Food God! Food God! Food God! Food God! Food God!”

More than 300 million people cheered and shouted enthusiastically, calling for Beyond the Heavens and his character name. Actually, Genie asked these people's cooperation to stage a 'surprise' and surprise Minhyuk. She said, “This is proof that you are a great king.”

Minhyuk felt a shiver run down his spine at those words. At that moment, he realized what he had to do. Minhyuk walked slowly and looked at the people around him. There, in front of him, was an old, shabby throne. The very same throne that was given to the lowest ranking king on the Battle of the Thrones. He slowly sat down on his throne.

This felt new to him. As someone that lived with a rare disease called eating addiction, Minhyuk lived every single day of his life thinking that he would die anytime. He had lived alone in his dark room as if the world had abandoned him.

But he was able to experience the game called Athenae, became the Food God, and made friends in the Legend Guild. Then, he became the king of Beyond the Heavens and came to enjoy the company of many people. Minhyuk was once a loner that suffered from eating addiction. But now, hundreds of millions of people came here to see him and celebrate with him. That was right. Everything that Minhyuk did was enough. It was enough for him to take pride in himself.

Minhyuk looked at the crowd of people, the hundreds of millions of Athenae players, that came to see him and said with a dignified voice, “I am the king of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

A loud roar shook the world as Minhyuk sat on the true and genuine 'Supreme Throne'.

Chapter 579: Louvert Guild

After the Battle of the Thrones, breaking news kept on pouring out.

[The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom ranked the lowest in the Battle of Thrones but is the true number one?]

[The true potential of Beyond the Heavens and the Koreans that fought against twenty seven? countries.]

[Vietnam's Master Archer Miao has expressed her desire to establish friendly relations with Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...]

[Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is the most searched word in global portal sites.]

[Experts have predicted that many players will traverse the Stars' Path and knock on the doors of Beyond the Heavens.]

[The membership of Food God Minhyuk's fancafe 'Eat 'til We Die' is expected to increase by around three million. His influence has such a great impact that even children dream of joining Beyond the Heavens.]

[Ilhwa Group's sales have dramatically increased due to their successor, Kang Minhyuk's move.]

[Ztube. The highlights of the Beyond the Heavens' battle during the Battle of the Thrones have swept Ztube's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th rankings. The 1st place in the rankings is the 'King's Banquet', where the Food God sat on his throne in front of 300 million players.]

Many articles praised the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and the outstanding potential that they had shown during the Battle of the Thrones. Meanwhile, a lot of people were paying attention to the rewards of the one that sat on the Supreme Throne.

[Alexander sat on the Supreme Throne. What are the rewards that the American rankers had received?]

[Alexander and America have become even stronger.]

[For the American rankers, the rewards that they will receive will depend on their contributions. They will be able to receive artifacts from epic~legendary and an additional 50 platinum.]

[What rewards will the Beyond the Heavens and the Korean rankers receive?]

[The Food God, as the lowest ranking king, will receive the basic reward of 50 platinum and some EXP buff potions.]

[The participating Korean rankers will receive 3 platinum each.]

[The rewards will not end there.]

[Two days later, the MVP will be selected from the participating countries. The MVP country will be chosen through voting. 10% will come from the global experts' votes and 90% will be from the viewers' votes.]

[The rewards for the MVP country have not yet been revealed.]

That was right. Beyond the Heavens Kingdom received the lowest rewards. In all honesty, the rewards that they received were not enough for the effort that they had put into participating. Because of that, Haze, Minhyuk's aid and the one in charge of the kingdom's finances and many more things, felt her head ache as she looked at Minhyuk and Grandpa Ben sitting together.

'Haa...'

Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was not able to generate enough profits for a few days because of their participation in the 'Battle of the Thrones', an event that God Athenae and Joy Co. had implemented. On top of that, the rewards that they received were also pitiful.

Of course, Haze heard that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom did a great job during that event. They even gained high honor and reputation. However...

'I'm the one in charge of the kingdom's finances, Your Majesty.'

Haze smiled bitterly. Indeed, she was in charge of an important task: managing the finances of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. This was a very important task. After all, they could not afford to be the kingdom that was destroyed because they lack money, right? So, even though the entire Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was in a festive mood as if they had won a victory, she was not.

And Minhyuk...

"Hehe, grandpa. Ah~"

"Ah~ *munch, munch*. Mhmm~ Everything that Your Majesty feeds me is very delicious. Here, Your Majesty, have a sip."

"Kihyaa~ Grandpa's coffee is the best!"

...and Ben were looking at each other happily. Despite her troubles, Haze could not help but smile and laugh together with them. They looked very happy after meeting each other again. In fact, the two of them could not be separated at all. They had been like that for hours.

But then, a dark and gloomy voice rang from another side.

"The young king and the old, muscular veteran ate and laughed happily after meeting each other again... but Vellenia, the God of Love, felt jealous of their bond and separated them once again... This is the struggle of the young king as he marched to save the old veteran from the hands of God of Love Vellenia...!"

Aruvel, with his fierce and unrelenting momentum, was busy writing his new work, '*His Majesty's Escort Knight*'. For some reason, Haze thought that she should not be here. So, she left the room and headed to the walls to look out at the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

However, Minhyuk followed after her and said, "I'm sorry. I did not meet your expectations, Haze."

Haze smiled bitterly at his words. Just like she expected, Minhyuk could see through even the smallest of worries. Even though he was very happy to reunite with Ben, he still went out of his way to try and understand what she was feeling.

"Not at all, Your Majesty. You know, this is the reason why I can't seem to have an ounce of dislike toward you."

"Ah, I'm not too sure but keep this in mind just in case. We might be getting another set of rewards in two days' time."

“Another reward?”

Haze tilted her head in confusion.

The other reward that Minhyuk was talking about was the MVP rewards. However, nothing had been confirmed yet. On top of that, many of the viewers were clamoring that taking 90% of the decision from viewers was not the right choice, since China had the greatest population among them. That was why Minhyuk could not confirm if Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would become the MVP.

“Ah, let me tell you this,” Minhyuk said as he looked at the other side of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s walls where the Stars’ Path ended, “We might not have received the material rewards, but we will be able to get far bigger rewards than that.”

“Yes?”

Haze could not understand at all but Minhyuk did not answer her, opting to just pat her on the shoulder and leave her be.

‘*A bigger reward?*’ Haze thought, looking curiously at the Stars’ Path, the very same direction where Minhyuk was looking at earlier.

What was the best chefs’ guild in South Korea’s Athenae? Anyone that was asked this question would answer ‘Louvert Guild’ without any hesitation. Louvert Guild was also one of the top three most influential guilds among all of the chefs’ guild in the Athenae worldview. Their guild master was none other than Twilight Chef Black, one of the top ten chefs in the world.

Guild Master Black and the Louvert Guild executives were having a meeting. All of the executive members of Louvert Guild were known as Korea’s best chefs. And right now, all of them were kicking up a fuss.

“Mr. Black, you said you’re going to Beyond the Heavens? What kind of nonsense is that?!”

“What do you mean by mentioning Beyond the Heavens?! Have you forgotten your dream to make Louvert Guild the best chefs’ guild in the world?!”

Everything had started when Black made a bet with Genie. If the situation was not like that, Black could just go and say, ‘*Eyyy, ptew, ptew, ptew! I revoke this bet!*’ even if he would get cursed at by Genie. However, tens of thousands of Korean rankers as well as dozens of cameras were present back then.

“I don’t think I can go back on my word.”

“Then, are you really going to Beyond the Heavens, Black?”

“I don’t have anything to say to you even if I have ten mouths. I leave Louvert Guild in your care, please lead it on my behalf.”

“Ho~”

“How could you join Beyond the Heavens...”

Of course, Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was a guild that the entire world recognized. But what the executives were concerned about was the ‘cooking’ aspect of things. All of the people present here were Korean chefs that had studied diligently abroad. They were very proud of their cooking and they did not like how Beyond the Heavens and the Food God Minhyuk were promoting themselves through simple dishes that could be eaten every day.

On top of that, Louvert Guild should have been the only thing that was mentioned when it came to the topic of chefs’ guilds in Korea. However, many players placed Beyond the Heavens Kingdom on a higher pedestal than them. For a chefs’ guild like them, they did not like Beyond the Heavens at all. That was what every single one of them thought.

Then, Avetto, one of the guild executives, said, “How about this?”

All of the executives present had judged that their guild did not have someone talented enough to lead Louvert Guild other than Black. So, everyone turned to focus on what Avetto had to say.

“Louvert Guild’s executives should visit Beyond the Heavens to try and evaluate all of the dishes that they offer personally. Then, we will show them our cooking and show them that they do not have the qualifications to covet Black!”

“If the Food God has shame, then he will realize that the cooking and the dishes that their kingdom offers are completely lacking when compared to the dishes and the cooking that Black and the members of Louvert Kingdom make.”

“The dishes and food culture in Athenae is focused solely on ‘buffs’. What else can the Food God’s dishes boast other than buffs? On top of that, the dishes that he offers are those things that anyone can eat every day; instant food, hamburgers... and this time he even presented cube steak~”

“Hoo~ Those same cube steaks that they sell on food trucks on the street? There are people that enjoy those kinds of things?”

“...”

Black immediately turned mute. He was actually the one that ate those cube steaks the fastest out of the 10,000 people that were given that dish. Also...

‘I really want to join them.’

Black was able to experience what it was like to be with Beyond the Heavens firsthand. None of his guild members had been able to participate in the Battle of the Thrones. It was because chefs would not prove to be useful in that battle at all. It was only thanks to the Black’s buff skills as a chef that he was able to participate in the war. And it was only because he participated that he was able to taste the dish that the Food God had made himself. Despite the simple and easy recipe, the dish tasted divine. It was something that he wanted to achieve so badly.

“Beyond the Heavens is promoting the sales of street food. We will taste them ourselves and give our own evaluation. And we can also do business once we pay taxes, so we can show them what true cooking is!!!”

‘But... but I really want to go to Beyond the Heavens?’

“That’s right!!! Let’s smash the Food God’s upturned nose down and bring all their chefs to Louvert Guild!!!”

“Since the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is trying to take away our great Black, let’s make an example out of them!!!”

Black looked at them and thought, *‘Please don’t do this to me...’*

The eight Louvert Guild executives were hailed as ‘Great Chefs’. This was because each and every single one of them were very influential chefs in South Korea. Some of them were hailed as the masters of Japanese cuisine, while some were hailed as the masters of Korean cuisine. Some were adept at Western cuisine and others at Chinese cuisine. Most of them were well-known chefs.

The youngest among these eight chefs, Bok-Gyeong, clicked his tongue after seeing the state of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

‘I can’t believe people are being enticed by street food like that...!’

What these masters intended to do was to eat and evaluate the dishes that Beyond the Heavens Kingdom called their specialties, point out their problems, and do business for a few days in their kingdom to show them how things should be. Bok-Gyeong was one of the people tasked with this mission. Right now, he was queuing in a very long line.

“The fried chicken skewers here are amazing~”

“I heard that these are the most delicious fried chicken skewers in the world!”

“Kyaaa~! I’m so excited.”

He had been waiting for more than an hour now! In fact, Bok-Gyeong did not really like the taste of street food, *‘The seasonings are too stimulating, the hygiene is bad, and to top it all off, most of the vendors that sell on the streets do not have an ounce of knowledge in cooking.’*

But they had the audacity to name the fried chicken skewers stall as ‘Emperor’s Skewers’. The person selling the fried chicken skewers was quite bulky and from what it looked like, he was selling fried chicken skewers that were heavily seasoned with chicken sauce.

‘The flavor should be ordinary. It’s obvious that they’re selling these by exaggerating the flavor,’ Bok-Gyeong concluded as his thoughts continued, *‘By the way, I wonder where the Chef of Delight is?’*

The Chef of Delight was a chef with out-of-this-world skills that shook the entire Asgan Continent before. From what Bok-Gyeong had heard, the dishes made by the Chef of Delight were, at the very least, comparable to Black’s own dishes. It was also said that each of the dishes that he made were

as special as they were delicious. Bok-Gyeong believed that he deserved to be hailed as a true, genuine chef, especially after he saved many people with his single dish.

However, the reason why Bok-Gyeong was particularly interested in the Chef of Delight was because he was the NPC that could help a player change into the legendary class: Chinese Cuisine's Legend. Eating his dish for the first time would allow one to gain enlightenment. Also, learning to cook from him would allow them to change their job class.

Bok-Gyeong, who was busy thinking about many things, finally stood at the front of the line. From up close, the chef looked a bit old. Bok-Gyeong looked at the chef and sarcastically said, "Why is this skewer called Emperor's Skewer?"

"Hoho. Believe it or not, I used to be the head chef of Her Majesty Ellie."

Bok-Gyeong thought that the man selling the skewers was trying to make him laugh!

'What? This bastard was Ellie's chef?'

Bok-Gyeong almost snorted. Fried chicken skewers were something that even a ten-year-old could easily do after being taught! Then, the NPC's name appeared above the man's head.

'Len.'

The man selling fried chicken skewers was the same man that worked as Empress Ellie's main chef, the very same man that taught Food God Minhyuk how to cook, and the one that saved the world through cooking. He was Asgan Continent's legend, the Chef of Delight.

Chapter 580: Louvert Guild

After a long wait, Bok-Gyeong finally received his fried chicken skewers, the embarrassment and disgust evident on his face, *'I'm a master of Chinese cuisine... to think I waited in line to try and eat something like this...'*

He held the fried chicken skewer that could easily be bought with 2,000 won in reality. He could feel the careful consideration of the 'fried chicken seller', from the tissue that wrapped the long stick of the fried chicken skewer and the thick coat of seasoning that covered the chicken.

'I don't think my appetite will grow after eating such trashy food.'?

Bok-Gyeong trembled at the thought of eating the food in his hand. However, he had to eat it so that Beyond the Heavens would not be able to take away the great Louvert Guild's master, Twilight Chef Black. Bok-Gyeong could only grit his teeth and take a little bite of the fried chicken skewers. The moment his teeth closed in on the meat...

Crunch—

A pleasant sound rang out. The more he chewed, the more he could taste the charms of the fried skewer.

'Huh?'

Bok-Gyeong looked confused. There was not much he could tell after tasting something so small, so this time, he took a big bite of the red, glossy, fried chicken skewer.

Crunch—

Another pleasant crunch greeted Bok-Gyeong's ears. The savory and rich flavor of the seasoned sauce, the juicy chicken, and the crunchy, perfectly fried batter spread out in his mouth, creating a perfect harmony.

'Deli...cious...!'

It was different from the greasy flavor that Bok-Gyeong knew of and expected. That was when Bok-Gyeong saw the 'fried chicken seller' replace the oil inside the frying pot. He could not help but ask, "Why are you throwing away the oil?"

"The more you fry something in the same batch of oil, the more the flavor changes. Also, it's not good for the body."

It was at that moment that Bok-Gyeong realized that the fried chicken seller was in full attire.

'What the...?'

The man was wearing a cooking cap and an apron, with gloves on his hands. The man was diligent with hygiene as well, and Bok-Gyeong could not differentiate him from the chef of a five star hotel. Not long after that, Bok-Gyeong ate up all of his fried chicken skewers in a hurry.

'Oh my god! I have never tasted a fried chicken skewer quite like this!'

Bok-Gyeong was not only an Athenae chef ranker, but also a renowned chef in reality. Right now, he was filled with genuine admiration toward the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's Emperor Skewers. But that was not the end. Bok-Gyeong was given another shock after he finished everything up.

[You have eaten a dish made by the Chef of Delight and have fulfilled the conditions to change to the legendary class: Chinese Cuisine's Legend.]

[You have become the Chinese Cuisine's Legend.]

[You have gained 1000 DEX.]

[You have acquired The Pleasure of Chinese Cuisine.]

[Len is a chef that has gained various achievements after overcoming many harsh difficulties and trials. If you learn how to cook under Len's tutelage, you will be able to increase your proficiency in Chinese Cuisine at a rapid pace.]

"...!"

Bok-Gyeong was shocked.

'The old and shabby man in front is the Chef of Delight? The very same chef that shook the entire Asgan Continent?'

On top of that, the man's job in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was to sell 'Emperor's Skewers'. It was completely unbelievable. However, the taste of the man's dish was proof enough. Bok-Gyeong was a chef that specialized in cooking Chinese dishes in reality so he could tell that the man

was the real deal. As a chef, he had a lot of things that he was curious about so he asked, “Why, why did you choose Chinese cuisine?”

Bok-Gyeong wanted to know the reason why Asgan Continent’s legendary chef chose Chinese cuisine. After all, it was a subject that he was adept in.

“His Majesty cooked Chinese food for me once. It was so delicious that it made me want to specialize in Chinese cuisine.”

“...!”

Bok-Gyeong was astonished after hearing the man’s words.?

‘Are you telling me that the Beyond the Heavens’ King’s cooking is at that level?!’

Anyone that heard that would wonder if it truly made sense. Just from tasting one dish, the Chef of Delight learned the pleasure and greatness of Chinese cuisine, and eventually reached a level where he became a legend in Chinese cuisine.

‘Beyond the Heavens’ King... The Food God...! He, he’s a very respectable person...! Also, wasn’t the Food God’s teacher the legend of Chinese cuisine?’

Actually, what Len told Bok-Gyeong was only half true. Len was born without a sense of taste. It was only after eating the sweet and sour pork, jjajang, and jjampong that Minhyuk prepared for him, that he started on the path of Chinese cuisine. He chose that purely because of his admiration toward the food.

Of course, Bok-Gyeong was unaware of the exact details of the events back then. His eyes sparkled brightly as he thought, *‘I will go to Beyond the Heavens too!’*

Bok-Gyeong, who had gone to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to prevent Black from moving, made a shocking decision right there and then.

At the same time.

Bully, the chef second to Black in Louvert Guild and a master of Korean cuisine, was someone that had a rough childhood. He had become successful through hard work and diligence. Bully also had a brother with an intellectual disability, and could not help but cry after tasting the ramyeon at ‘Conir’s Ramyeon Shop’.

“I, I have never tasted ramyeon this delicious...!”

It was only ramyeon using ordinary and common ingredients, but it had the best flavor! Bully believed that this was something that he had to learn as a chef. It was also shocking to him to see that a boy with a condition similar to his younger brother, was able to cook such delicious ramyeon.

“Hey kid, why did you choose to cook ramyeon?”

“His Majesty told Conir that Conir would be the one in charge of ramyeon. Conir is glad that he cooked ramyeon!!!”

“Ah...!”

At that moment, Bully felt his heart throb, as if it was embraced by a warm breeze. He thought, *‘Even intellectually disabled young boys can easily cook ramyeon...!’*

Bully wondered if it was because the Food God wanted to boost the child’s self-esteem and independence, and asked an intellectually disabled boy to perform an easy task.

‘That was it, right?!’

Of course, the truth was that the Food God only needed someone in charge of making ramyeon for him. But Bully was unaware of that, his emotions already getting the better of him as tears began to well up in his eyes.

‘The Beyond the Heavens King is a great man! He is a kind man!!! Aaah! I can’t help but recall my past!!!’ Bully was moved and thrilled beyond words.

At another place.

Rouwad, the master of Japanese cuisine, was a man that suffered from baldness at a young age of thirty. The middle of his head was a vast and clear ‘land’, free of any ‘grass’.

“Everyone, you can grow yours too!!! Do you believe it?!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaah!!! We believe it!!!”

“We believe!!!”

As Rouwad stood among the countless fanatics, he felt the center of his head heat up and ‘grass’ beginning to grow on his otherwise clear ‘land’.

‘T, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is a very amazing place...!’

Rouwad was moved by the greatness of this place.

At another location.

One of the chefs sat beside Spear God Ben and drank a cup of coffee while thinking, *‘I have never tasted coffee better than this...’*

The chef was in awe. But what made things better were the stories that Spear God Ben told as they drank their coffee.

“I lost my son and went to the Dragon King’s Sea to avenge him.”

The reason why Spear God Ben was telling this story was because he had learned a lot of things when it came to attracting people during his time serving Minhyuk. Through this, Spear God Ben was able to shake the hearts of the people and make them look favorably upon the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

“I was able to see His Majesty again after fighting countless battles with Aerdes.”

“Aaaaaaaah! What a very touching story!” The chef exclaimed, tears trickling down his cheeks after listening to Ben. It was a beautiful story, a story that no one could listen to without shedding a few tears along the way!

Then, he asked, “Ah, I wonder what coffee bean you used in this coffee? It tastes quite sweet.”

“Ah. I added some honey.”

“I see.”

The honey that Ben used was ‘Sea Honey’, something that Minhyuk used before. The words ‘like king, like retainer’ were truly apt for the situation.

Louvert Guild’s Master Black could not help his embarrassment. Just like what he told his eight executives, he wanted to go to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, because he wanted to gain more insights into cooking, at that place where they could make dishes with amazing flavors by using ordinary ingredients. Black’s words and actions might have been shitty, but his desire to learn and to cook better was genuine.

‘Right, it’s better for me to tell them what’s really on my mind.’

Black thought that he should tell his executives the reason why he truly wanted to go to Beyond the Heavens. But when he met with them again...

“...”

...he was left unable to open his mouth. It was because the expressions on the faces of all eight of his executives were grim and solemn.

‘What in the world happened to them in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?’

Black had no idea about the events that transpired when they went to visit Beyond the Heavens.

Then, their youngest, Bok-Gyeong, said, “GM... and seniors... I want to go and find the Food God right away.”

“Right!!!”

“Let’s go and find him right away!!!”

“Let’s go now!!!”

At that moment, Black realized that it was hard to bring up anything after seeing the sharp glint in their eyes. There was a high chance that these people would find trouble with the Food God, and discuss his qualifications, as well as talk about what true ‘cooking’ was. Black thought that it might be impossible for him to join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom if they said those things and made things worse for him.

‘I’m done for.’

Black sighed lightly. Not long after, the top brass of the Louvert Guild was able to successfully hold a meeting with Food God Minhyuk.

Minhyuk could not hide the doubt on his face when he heard that Louvert Guild’s GM and executives came to find him. He thought, *‘Don’t tell me...?’*

Minhyuk frowned. He was aware that many chefs were pointing their fingers at him and mocking his cooking, saying that it was nothing more than playing house. As for Minhyuk? He actually

acknowledged some of their words. True, Minhyuk had never learned cooking professionally. But was that reason enough for them to discuss ‘qualifications’ with him? That was laughable. Minhyuk looked at the people with vigilance in his eyes. He was prepared to counter them strongly the moment they tried to discuss his qualifications in cooking.

At that moment, the youngest out of them, Bok-Gyeong, stepped forward grimly and... “Food God!!!” called out to him loudly. It was so loud and powerful that even Minhyuk was left flustered. Then...

“Your Majesty!!! Please accept me in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!”

Thuuuud—

...he went down on both knees and begged Minhyuk earnestly.

“...???”

Minhyuk could not help but tilt his head in confusion. Then, another man ran toward a position that was far more forward than Bok-Gyeong’s position! The chef, whose head was originally empty of hair, knelt down and bowed his head that was now covered with luscious hair, and shouted, “Me too!!! Please accept me too!!!”

“...???”

One by one, the executives of Louvert Guild knelt down and asked Minhyuk to accept them.

“...???”

“...???”

“...???”

Question marks popped up in Minhyuk’s head at the sight in front of him. Meanwhile, Black had turned red after seeing all of his guild members kneel down and asked to join the Beyond the Heavens, leaving him behind.

In fact, Minhyuk could empathize with what was going through Black’s head.

‘What in the world happened to these people to make them do something like that?’

Louvert Guild was a chef’s guild that Black worked hard to raise and nurture. Minhyuk actually acknowledged Black’s pride as someone that built a guild aimed at becoming the best chef’s guild in the world. At that moment, Minhyuk wondered what Black would feel when he was about to lose all of his guild executives?

Black strode forward with a red face. Minhyuk, for a moment, thought, *‘Am I going to get slapped...?’*

But then, Black exclaimed, “Food God! I hope you did not forget that I was the one that asked to join your Beyond the Heavens Kingdom first!!!”

“...?”

“Just take this opportunity to annex and take the Louvert Guild under the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!”

“Oh. That’s a great idea. Take all of us under your wing!!!”

“Yes!!! Take Louvert!!!”

“Your Majesty, please accept us!!!”

“Then, Louvert Guild now belongs to Beyond the Heavens?”

“*Ahem!*”

“Good. Food God, please take Louvert Guild!!!”

Minhyuk watched as the members of Louvert Guild ‘played the drums and beat the janggu’. They even changed their words from ‘please accept us’ to ‘take us’ as if it was only right for him to accept them. The situation was completely ridiculous but Minhyuk thought, ‘*So lucky?*’

Just like that, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom absorbed Louvert Guild into their ranks. They had now secured a firm and huge foothold that would allow their kingdom to become a true and complete cooking nation.