

Gourmet 591

Chapter 591: Lady of the Snakes, Leona

Joy Co. Ltd. had turned the Stars' Path into a field filled with events, as well as the path that connected other continents during the server integration. Now, this Stars' Path was being called 'Disaster's Path' by the players. In just a few short hours, more than 200,000 players had died. Leona and her 50 Snake Soldiers wielded an overwhelming power.

"Ugh... This is scary..."

"What kind of game is this? Why am I feeling so tense and nervous?"

"I want to live!!! Mom! I miss you!!!"

"Hey, this is just a game. Don't do that, it makes it look like everything is real."

"How about you go and try it once yourself?"

The players were hiding all over the place. Someone was holding their breath as they clung onto a tree, while another hid behind a rock. There was even someone from the army that dug the ground and covered himself with fallen leaves.

Meanwhile, there was someone in the Stars' Path that was very worried about the NPCs.

"René, don't worry. We'll be able to come out of here alive."

"Y, yeah..."

Athenae was a virtual reality game and it was not impossible for players to date NPCs and hold virtual weddings in the game. The player named Panno looked at René, who was trembling in fear. Although the Stars' Path was filled with plenty of hunting grounds, there were also fishing grounds and places where one could view flowers and the beauty of nature. In fact, no danger would come to the people that visited the Stars' Path, unless they entered a field or a hunting ground so many people came to see a spectacular view that they could not see in reality. And that was exactly what Panno and René did.

'René... someone like you...'

A player and an NPC could develop real feelings with each other and form a relationship. Of course, that also included love and making love. Unfortunately, NPCs' death would also mean an eternal goodbye, just like death in reality. Although Panno was only a Level 350 player, he vowed to protect René.

The couple were hiding behind a rock, both holding their breaths to hide their presence. Leona and her army were passing by in the distance. But then... Leona's head turned toward their direction and said, "Kill those rats."

"Hisssssssss—"

"Hisssssssssss—"

The God of Snakes' army that was led by Leona was only a small force. But they possessed a strength that even Master Archer Miào could only hunt one or two of them at most. And these beings were now charging toward the forest.

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaaaaack!”

“No! If I die then my level...! Keok!”

“Keuhoooooooook!”

Screams ran rampant as the people that were hiding died one after another. Seeing this, Panno could not help but gulp dryly while saying, “The moment I give the signal, run as fast as you can toward the other side.”

“But, but... Panno...”

“I'll be fine. Even if I die, I will still be able to come back to life. But that's not the case for you.”

René was a young NPC. She was a girl of 20 years old. All she could do was look at Panno in tears while nodding her head. Then...

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

A man with the face of a snake appeared behind Panno and aimed for his head.

“Sword Attack!!!”

Baaaaang!!!

“Dancing Sword!!!”

Crackle, crackle—

“Billowing Wind!!!”

Panno used all of his skills in that short moment, but none of his attacks left a scratch on the snake man's body. Rather...

Slash—

...it was Panno that fell down from a single attack of the enemy.

‘René? What about René...?’

Even as he flew back and rolled on the ground, his eyes still followed René's figure. He saw her running on the other side. However, the bastard that attacked him moved swiftly and aimed for René's neck. Panno thought that he would be witness to how the love of his life got beheaded. Just the horrible thought alone was suffocating Panno.

“Renéeeeeeeee!!!” Panno cried out as he shut his eyes tightly. But then...

Stab—

A harpoon from who knew where stabbed through the Snake Soldier's abdomen.

"Hihihihing!" A black horse neighed loudly as the man riding on top of it tugged on the rope connected to the harpoon before dashing away.

"Hiiiiiiiiissssss!"

The Snake Soldier was dragged away by the rope. There were 1,000 players that ran after the man, all of them keeping their distance and maintaining their battle lines.

"From now on, we will run as fast as we can toward our destination!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Yes, sir!"

The players ran in their battle formation. Their cloaks, with the cross symbol, fluttered behind them.

"The Maserrati Guild...?" Panno murmured as he recognized the symbol and the identity of the charging people. He quickly hugged René and both took refuge in a safe place.

Leona turned furious after seeing one of her soldiers get dragged away, *"It seems like these insignificant humans are truly daring. To dare to touch my child like that?"*

Leona and her army turned to chase after them. Even though they were just running, they were still able to catch up with the people that were riding on horses. But...

"Ricando!!!"

Rumble, rumble, rumble!!!

A magical explosion shook the ground and stopped Leona and her troops' advance.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

However, some of her men were able to break through the flames and caught up with their horses. Thankfully, the archer players that were dashing on top of the trees stopped them by shooting their arrows.

"Hiyaaaah!"

"Hiyaaaah!"

The thousand players turned around and began to surround Leona and her army. For those that saw the Maserrati guild's force, this was an amazing sight. Then, another of Absolute Monarch Richard's skills made its appearance in the Stars' Path.

[You have activated the Absolute Monarch's Voice.]

[Those that wish to join the hunt to kill Leona, please come to Area A-41. It's better for Level 450~500 players to come.]

As if Richard was speaking through a giant speaker, his voice rang loudly in the entire Stars' Path. Richard felt bitter after witnessing the death of 200,000 players. However, if the players gather

together, the damage that they could deal with would be greater. Players who volunteered and gathered willingly were different from those that had been sacrificed. For players that volunteered, it was their choice to gather because they wanted to get a share of the rewards and EXP.

'We need their power to kill Leona.'

Richard continued to run forward as the blood of the rankers that were hiding all over the place began to boil in excitement.

“What are the rewards for hunting Leona?”

For the likes of Leona, Great Demon Verus, or Demigod Asura, hunting them would need a large-scale raiding party. Because of that, even those that had only a small amount of contribution would be able to receive rewards as long as they were participants of the hunt. Of course, the chances of getting better rewards would increase if their contributions were high.

On top of that, all players had a dream, which was to participate and be able to hunt a being comparable to a god one day. Perhaps that being was Leona.

“Let’s goooooo!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!!!”

“He said Area A-41, right? Kill them all!!!”

“But you’re Level 92?”

“...Sh, shut up!!!”

Maserrati Guild’s Richard was someone that knew how to use the crowd well. It was all because of him that the people hiding all over the Stars’ Path began to gather at Area A-41.

Henry was the Maserrati Guild’s mage. Black Mage Henry was a talented figure that would not necessarily lose against Beyond the Heavens’ Golden Mage Ali. He was also the one that inherited the powers of the God of Black Magic, Veylon, a god whose magic could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the God of Magic Archipelo.

Henry’s lips turned into a thin line, tension evident in his body.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

The sound of footsteps reverberated loudly in the area.

'Did Richard’s Royal Decree work?'

Richard had decided that they needed the power of the people to gain more force. Besides, if they could successfully complete this large-scale raid with these people, it would also help them promote the Maserrati Guild. And the ones that appeared as the sound of footsteps grew closer...

“This is where Leona’s Raid would be, right?”

“...”

Henry gulped dryly at the sight of the people that were in the Stars' Path. Over 100,000 players had gathered in this place. Of course, only 9,700 of them were players at Level 450~500 and only around 200 were players above Level 500. The rest, around 90,000, were players that were below that. However, no one could deny that the number that had gathered was enormous.

“Yes, that's right. They will be here soon. The mages will prepare for a magic bombing with me while the archers will prepare to use their strongest pinnacle skill. The summoners have to summon all of their monsters and block the frontlines. The tankers have to form a unit and form a huge wall of shields behind the monster troops. The spearmen will be using their 'throw' and 'retrieve' skills to put pressure on the enemies...”

“Wait. Why should we listen to your orders?”

Of course, there were many proud rankers among them. The Maserrati Guild might be the hottest guild these days, but these rankers could not understand why they had to follow Henry's words. Then...

“Kyaaaaaaaaaack!!!”

Leona's bone-chilling cry rang loudly and hit everyone's eardrums.

“Urkkkkk!”

“What, what the hell?!”

“Aaaaaaaaaaack!”

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The pain ringing in their heads stopped only after Henry brandished his black wand.

“...Let's do as he says.”

The rankers ended up accepting the orders obediently. They could tell that Henry was a very high-tiered mage. On top of that, the enemies were already near them. In other words, they did not have any time to lose to argue over who was in charge.

The players quickly blended among the troops and fell in line. The trap masters helped set up a trap between two large trees that were facing each other. The others? They moved just like what Henry instructed them to do earlier. Then...

Clip, clop, clip, clop—

The sound of horse hooves running rang loudly in the area. Richard ran at the forefront with the members of the Maserrati Guild following right behind him.

‘All of them are the elites of the guild.’

It was possible with them. No one would be afraid to confront Marquess Leone, when they were with these elites and 100,000-strong troops! This was what Henry believed.

Henry slowly raised his hand. The God of Snakes' Army and Leona would be engulfed in a series of explosions the moment Henry pushed the button and released the traps that they had laid out in the middle of those trees. Richard and his troops were about to pass by the trees. Just when he tried to stop Richard from stepping on the ground, something unexpected happened.

"Let there be chaos," Leona said, her hair-raising voice ringing in the surrounding.

"N, no..."

Henry immediately realized that something was wrong. He hurriedly cast a black shield on the ground! At the same time...

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

The traps exploded beneath Richard and the 1,000 Maserrati guild members, devouring their figures.

A trap master was a class that had little to no merit. They were not as fast as close combat classes and could not use magic like the mages. So, why did people still choose it? This was because as long as they installed the traps and set it off, it could devour both close combat and mage players alike. The power of their traps was beyond anyone's imagination.

Henry's black shield crumbled under the explosion, the aftermath sweeping away the thousand guild members. The worst part? The 50 Snake Soldiers and Leona began to unleash their attacks.

"A, attack!!!" Richard, despite being devoured by the explosion, gave his order urgently.

Henry immediately pointed forward and shouted, "Fire!!!"

Crackleeee!

Rumbleeee—

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

"Phoenix Arrow!!!"

"Continuous Shot!!!"

"Rampant Arrows!!!"

"Homing Missile!!!"

Nearly 10,000 arrows covered the skies. However, Leona's yellow eyes turned red and...

[Elizabeth's Breath.]

[Elizabeth's Breath protects her child, Leona!]

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Like someone breathing out, a stream of red air spread out and covered Leona's entire body. And the magic attacks and arrows that covered the skies...

[The magic's force has weakened!]

[The magic's force has weakened!]

[The magic's force...!]

[The magic's force has weak...!]

The magical attacks gradually lost their power until they disappeared into thin air, while the arrows speed lost their momentum until they fell down on the ground and snapped.

“...!”

“...!”

That was how monstrous Leona was. That was not even the end of it.

[Leona's Eyes.]

[Your body will harden and turn to stones once you make eye contact with Leona!]

“E, eye contact...?!”

“Close your eyes...!!!”

The rankers hurriedly shouted. However, it was already too late. Surprisingly enough, Leona's eyes began to appear everywhere. Thousands of eyes appeared both in the land and in the air. Even the rankers' weapons and armor were covered with Leona's eyes.

“Hiiiiik!!!”

Crack, crack, crack!

“Waaaaaaaaah!”

Crack, crack, crack!

“What, what the hell!!!”

Crack, crack, crack!

The scene was completely like a page out of the horror books. The ones that accidentally made eye contact with Leona slowly hardened until they turned into stones. In just an instant, 30,000 players had hardened and turned to stone out of the 100,000 strong troops.

Henry took a step back in horror, he mumbled, “How, how can we kill someone like that...”

Henry could tell that the Maserrati Guild and the rest of the people that gathered here today would be completely wiped out.

Chapter 592: Lady of the Snakes, Leona

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had won many battles that others had deemed impossible to win. Their first battle was with Black Dragon Vormon. Then, they sealed Great Demon Verus, before proceeding to fight and win against Demigod Asura. Everyone had divided opinions back then, some believing that the players' powers were not enough and it would be 'impossible to hunt' such beings, while some believed that they could.

As for the Maserrati Guild? They also firmly believed that they would be able to kill Leona. After all, Leona was not one of the Six Monster Gods, she was just Elizabeth's child. But the power displayed by the marquess right now was beyond their imagination.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

“Hiiiiiiik!”

“Aaah, aaaaaaaaaack!”

“This is ridiculous!!!”

“Vance!!!”

The comrades that had just been advancing with them a few moments prior had now turned into stones. Everyone was shocked by the sudden turn of events. They ended up falling on their butts and crawling back from fear. However, the path behind them was blocked. Behind them was another person that had turned to stone.

Leona inhaled with relish the chaos-tainted air filled with confusion and fear, as if she was breathing the freshest air, “Hmmmmmm~ Haaaaaaa~”

Her beautiful figure caused the players to tremble in fear and terror as she elegantly raised her hand and savored the atmosphere around her.

“Break,” Leona said, her beautiful voice ringing in the area.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

Cracks started to appear on the players that had turned into stone. Even the summons, which did not have a high level of intelligence, failed to protect themselves and turned into stone. Including the summoners, their monsters, and the players, around 80,000 fighters had turned into stone. The cracks spread throughout their hardened bodies, and in a mere moment, they crumbled into pieces.

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

In just an instant, 30,000 of their gathered troops had disappeared. Richard, who was gravely injured from the aftermath of the explosion, looked at the scene incredulously. Right after that, the 50 Snake Soldiers jumped into the players' midst, as poisons of various colors shot out of their mouths.

[You have been hit by a bleeding poison.]

[If you don't detoxify the poison, your body will begin to bleed all over!]

Some of the players accidentally ingested the poison and started to bleed through their eyes, ears and nose.

[You have been paralyzed.]

[Your body has started to harden and turn into a stone.]

Some players turned into stone, just like when Leona cast her AOE skill earlier.

[You have been hit by an exploding poison.]

[One touch from the exploding poison will trigger a powerful explosion on your body.]

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

It was a simple poison skill, but explosions occurred all over the place.

“Rankers!!!”

“Just you wait!!!”

“Go!!!”

Some of the players were top rankers at Level 500 or higher. These players had high abnormal status resistance, incredible stats, and excellent skills.

Baaaaaang—

A swordsman tried to cut down a Snake Soldier.

“Wh, what...?”

The player used an ability that could instantly double his attack power and cutting force. However, only a scratch was inflicted on the Snake Soldier’s glossy and shiny scales.

Punch—

The Snake Soldier, who had the head of a dragon, punched through the ranker’s chest and pierced his heart.

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

“F*cking bastards! Why are they so strong?!!!”

“Let go of him!!!”

The other rankers rushed at the Snake Soldier. However, they were only able to inflict damage after using their pinnacle skills. These beings all had high HP. The God of Snake’s Army of 50 continued to dig through the gaps of the remaining 70,000 players.

“Kyahahahaha!” Leona covered her mouth, cackling at the state of the humans in front of her.

The most important thing here was the fact that Leona had not even made a move yet. Yet, in an instant, more than 3,000 players had died.

At that moment, Richard gave his orders to the members of the Maserrati Guild. “Slaughter them.”

“Yes, sir!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Yes, sir!”

The Maserrati guild members immediately recovered from the injuries that they had sustained from the explosion earlier, and charged forward. At the same time, several Snake Soldiers that were being subjected to the rankers’ attacks suddenly took to the skies. The one that made them fly was none other than Black Mage Henry.

“F*ck. These sons of b*tches are pretty strong.”

Henry immediately raised his black wand.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

Black explosions burst out from deep within the bodies of the Snake Soldiers.

Daaaaash—

Then, a man leapt up with a greatsword in hand. The man was middle-aged, with a body so big that it could rival Elpis or even Brod’s stature. If the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had the best close combat fighters in the form of Ares and Khan, then the Maserrati Guild had the ‘Greatsword Master’ Ruvago, a Ranker Among Rankers. No, in fact, he was more than that.

Slaaaaaash—

Ruvago’s greatsword split a Snake Soldier in half in one swift movement. At that moment, another man appeared behind another Snake Soldier.

At one point in time, an assassin guild by the name of ‘Hitman’ had dominated the Japanese server. Just like its name suggested, it was a guild composed of assassins. However, this very guild had been annihilated by a single man in one night. The man’s identity was not known to the public. However, his visage was revealed today. He was none other than Japan’s Assassin King, Rui.

Fwooooooosh—

One attack dealt 6,000% damage. But it did not end there. A dagger was thrust into the shrieking Snake Soldier dozens of times in a single second.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

After taking down one Snake Soldier, Rui moved like a ghost to hunt the other Snake Soldiers.

“This, this is the Maserrati Guild...?”

“Crazy...”

All of the players knew that the Beyond the Heavens was the best guild in existence. But it seemed like the performance of the rankers present here was about to change their minds. Assassin Rui was far superior in terms of power to Informant Abel, while the damage dealt by Greatsword Master Ruvago’s greatsword was far greater than Alexander’s damage.

At the center of them all was Absolute Monarch Richard.

Richard shouted, “Don’t be scared! You have a spirit that can help you stand back again even after falling down and a strong body that will not let you back down. Roar bravely! I, the Absolute Monarch, will protect you!!!”

[The Absolute Monarch’s Royal Decree has been triggered!]

[Everyone that hears the ‘Tenacious Royal Decree’ will receive an 11% increase in all stats and a 15% increase in abnormal status resistance!]

[You have forgotten your fears.]

“...”

“...”

“...”

It was crazy. He was able to give buffs to all 70,000 players here? That was something that even Valkyrie Mei Wei could not do. In fact, even Food God Minhyuk could not achieve something like that. It was because Food God Minhyuk had to cook before he could give a buff.

Then, golden letters appeared in the skies and swiftly flew to their targets: Assassin King Rui, God of Black Magic Henry, and Greatsword Master Ruvago.

[The ‘Absolute Monarch’s’ Divine Stigma has been imprinted!]

[A 0.5% reduction in all stats will be imposed upon you as a penalty for every person that you imprint the Divine Stigma on!]

[For the ones that received the Divine Stigma, they will be able to receive a +24% increase in all stats and a +2 increase in their skill levels.]

The key members of Maserrati Guild could see what Absolute Monarch Richard was putting at stake here. They knew that the Divine Stigma would impose a 0.5% all-stat reduction per person that it was imprinted on. In other words, all of Richard’s stats and abilities had received a 1.5% reduction. However, the fact that he could raise someone’s power in an instant still made it a very powerful ability, especially if their targets were Rui, Henry and Ruvago.

“Woooooooooooooh!”

Ruvago split apart the head of one of the Snake Soldiers in one strike, while Black Mage Henry cast various debuffs on the enemy.

“Wow. That’s crazy...!”

“We couldn’t even do anything with our numbers!”

“Crazy!”

The players were watching the Maserrati Guild in awe.

“If things continue at this rate, then taking down Leona is not just a pipe dream for us!!!”

The players were actually getting stronger. However, in contrast to their burning enthusiasm, cold sweat was already dripping down Richard’s back.

'No, it will be difficult.'

Leona was still watching everything on the sidelines while stroking her 'viper hair' languidly. This meant that Leona was not feeling any sense of crisis at all. The number of Snake Soldiers had already halved from the initial fifty. That just went to show how high the damage on the players' side was. After all, more than 10,000 players had died to just kill that many.

Leona continued to stroke her hair, a bored look on her face as she said, "Is that all?"

"..."

She grinned, "You're weak."

"..."

"..."

Leona evaluated Richard's majesty and dignity to be something weak. As if to prove it to him, the dozens of vipers resting on her head and acting as her hair began to move, writhing fiercely.

"We should end all the killing now."

The vipers turned into light and stretched out. The place where one particular viper was aiming for was none other than the place where Rui was.

As an assassin class player, Rui was very quick on his feet. His speed should have been more than enough to avoid the vipers. However, at that moment, he made eye contact with the viper.

[You have fallen into a powerful stunned state.]

"W, what...?!"

Leona's abilities left him utterly defenseless and unable to move, with the viper free to bite him on the neck with its poisonous fangs.

"Keuaaaaaaaaaaack!"

[All of your stats will fall by 50% for five minutes.]

[All of your skill levels will be halved for five minutes.]

[Your HP will rapidly decrease for five minutes.]

The strength in Rui's body was drained away in an instant. And it was not just him. Dozens of vipers stretched out and targeted all of the key members of the Maserrati Guild. It was difficult to avoid them as they were thin, long, and fast. None of them could manage it. On top of that, just one look at them and they would fall into a 'stunned' state.

[All of your stats will fall by 50% for five minutes.]

[All of your skill levels will be halved for five minutes...]

These notifications constantly rang in the ears of the members of the Maserrati Guild. Ruvago, who had been showing great momentum earlier, fell down after being hit by one of the Snake Soldiers. A 50% drop in all stats and skill levels was that catastrophic.

Leona approached them one slow step at a time.

Swooooooosh—

“Keuhaaaaaaaaaack!”

Reaching out with her hand, she easily lifted the tall and bulky Ruvago and started strangling him. Ruvago struggled fiercely in her hold, but Leona just looked at him as if it was funny. Slowly, ever so slowly, Ruvago fell into a petrified state.

“...Ruvago!!!”

Ruvago was Richard’s precious comrade, and Richard dashed toward the two of them to save him. However, everyone knew that he was already too late.

Still, Ruvago was a Ranker Among Rankers; he was the strongest among everyone in the guild and was Maserrati’s pride and joy.

Grab—

Even while his own neck was being gripped tight, Ruvago was still able to grab Leona’s neck with both of his hands.

“Ho?”

Then, Ruvago squeezed out the last of his strength.

“Warrior’s Sacrifice!!!”

For three seconds, just three short seconds, Ruvago’s stats increased by 70%. However, the price for it was death. Then, Ruvago rushed toward the huge wall with Leona’s neck in his hands.

“Ho?”

Even though she was being choked like that, Leona still looked as if she was watching something interesting. Just like that, Ruvago slammed her with all his might against the wall.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Leona giggled, her body embedded deep into the wall. Finally, Ruvago grabbed her by the neck once more and jumped up.

When using Warrior’s Sacrifice, a powerful explosion would occur upon the warrior’s death. The explosion was powerful enough to sweep the entire area away. That was why Ruvago jumped—he wanted to reduce the damage to the others as much as he could.

“Ah...”

“Crazy...”

An unknown feeling swept over the players at the sight of one player’s sacrifice. As for the person that had jumped to the skies? He finally exploded.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

As if a nuclear bomb had exploded, all of the vines and the trees that grew on the crevices of the stone wall were swept away and destroyed. The remains of Ruvago’s body turned into ashes and disappeared with the wind.

As the vines disappeared, the entrance to a cave appeared. Leona fell down in front of the entrance without a scratch on her body.

Leona was getting increasingly bored. She was interested in these daring people, but her disappointment in them was growing by the second. So, she wanted to ease her boredom by seeing their fear and terror.

“My mother, Elizabeth, fell asleep here after being kicked out by the gods. Why was my mother kicked out? Simple. Because she is a monster,” Leona said, giggling at the players as she looked around at them. Then, as if on cue, thousands of snakes began to rain down on them.

“H-hiiiiiiiiik!”

“What, what the hell is this?!”

“Uwaaaaaaaack!”

The players were horrified to see the snakes fall down and cling to their bodies. As the snakes fell down, they writhed until they grew in size.

“N, no way...”

Richard had a terrifying hunch. The snakes that were falling to the ground were Snake Soldiers.

‘She can do something like this?!’

Leona had this strong army under her command?! And as if she enjoyed the increasing fear and panic, Leona said, “I will kill the gods that drove us and my mother here. Even the God of Origin, Athenae. Kyahahahaha!”

Leona’s expression was distorted with how loud she was laughing, the dozens of vipers on her head writhing like crazy. Finally, the hundreds of snakes took on their original form.

‘The hair... that’s how she’s commanding them...!’

Richard realized this fact. However, there was no way to stop her. With a horrifying look on her face, she said, “I will take that seat and seat on the throne of the God of Origin. Fear me, all shall fall into despair...”

Leona cackled as she looked at the shocked faces of everyone around her.

‘That’s right. I will be the one to do that. I will kill Athenae, the God of Origin, and become the true owner of that title.’

However, she was wrong. The people were shocked not because of her declaration, but because of something else.

Ping—

An unidentified sword swung through Leona’s hair, cutting off dozens of vipers in one go.

Thud, thud, thud—

The vipers that were cut off of her head fell down on the ground and writhed like crazy before disappearing with a hiss. Blood spilled from her hair, dyeing Leona's face with green blood.

“...”

Leona could not understand why there was blood flowing on her face. When she turned around, she saw a man moving to thrust his sword, which was exploding with power, toward her heart.

“Beyond the Heavens' King...?” Richard mumbled in shock as he watched the man stab Leona in the heart.

Thud—!

Chapter 593: Minhyuk's Connections

The hunt for Leona was being broadcasted live all over the world. Countless BJs and broadcasting stations had their cameras rolling to show the entire world how the Maserrati Guild and the 100,000 gathered troops died a gruesome death.

Everyone was witness to how monstrous Leona was. From what they saw, she was even more powerful than Demigod Asura. She could cast plenty of debuffs on her enemies and even control the system. Even the players who were not present and commentators felt devastated, having watched the collapse of the 100,000 troops and Maserrati Guild in person.

[If things continue at this rate, then everyone in the Stars' Path will die.]

[Leona will kill them before killing all of the beings in the Stars' Path.]

[Just like what the players are saying, the Stars' Path has now become the Path of Disasters.]

The viewers and commentators were all appalled to see Leona land in front of an unknown cave entrance, unscathed and free to summon her hundreds of thousands of Snake Soldiers.

[We don't even know the extent of Leona's power.]

[From what I heard, this shocking, powerful army is something that Elizabeth has. It seems like Leona has also inherited the power to command them.]

[Everyone will be wiped out. With that number of Snake Soldiers, it's already a given that the entire Stars' Path will become a sea of blood and a field.]

[The Maserrati Guild and the army of players were able to get Leona's attention and drag the time. This means that the players will be able to log out soon. We recommend all of the players watching this to log out as soon as you can.]

They could not deny how terrible the situation was. However, deep inside a cave, an unknown figure slowly crept behind Leona, who was drunk on her own power.

[...?]

[...?]

The figure cut off Leona's viper hair and he did not even stop there, stabbing straight towards Leona's heart with his sword. The sword attack was none other than Sword of Frenzy.

Staaaaaab—!

Sword of Frenzy was a skill that could best display its might when used against an individual, triggering an additional 400% damage upon successful attack on a vital point. It also would deal six additional attacks in a row, with an additional 100% damage. In other words...

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—!

...Leona's heart received six more brutal attacks.

“Kyaaaaaaaaack!”

As the sword went through her heart, Leona uttered her very first scream. However, it was not over. Minhyuk's Continent Destroyer Sword was currently engraved with the golden word 'Destruction'.

While Sword of Frenzy was strong, Minhyuk could not deny the fact that it was the weakest among the skills that he had. The only reason why he used Sword of Frenzy was because Destruction would give 700% additional damage to sixteen consecutive attacks.

At that moment, Destruction's lightning fell down from the skies and devoured Leona.

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

Leona was completely defenseless. Her overwhelming power made her arrogant, which was the main reason why she failed to realize that someone was creeping up behind her. On top of that, the one that gave her such a strong blow was the King of Beyond the Heavens, Minhyuk.

Leona staggered back from the pain. Minhyuk immediately took a step forward and...

“Sword of Absolute Death.”

Stab—!

A powerful strike that hit the enemy unconditionally brought pain to Leona all at once. And to the one that received the first blow, there would be seven more hits, with an additional 500% attack power would be inflicted on them.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

“Kiyaaaaaaaaaaaaaack! S, stoooooop!!! How, how dare you! Do you know who I am...?!”

Leona was suddenly thrown into shock.

[You have fallen into a three second stunned state.]

The Sword of Absolute Death, aside from its 100% success rate, would also bring the target into a three-second stunned state. Right after that, hundreds of blades appeared and danced around her, striking her with another 200% damage. On top of that, the attack also exploded, with an additional 500% damage upon contact with her body.

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

Everyone present on the scene watched incredulously.

‘That powerful Leona is...’

‘She wasn't even able to make a move...’

‘What the hell?! Is he some kind of monster?!’

Leona’s shrieks caused everyone to be in awe. Her figure was completely covered in green blood.

“Bastaaaaaaaard!” Leona screamed, her anger boiling over as poison spewed out from her body. She was literally about to explode. After all, she had never felt so humiliated in her life.

I will tear that man to pieces! I am the great snake queen! I will be the woman that will become the God of Beginning!?

Leona’s eyes flashed open. She wanted to turn Minhyuk into stone as their eyes made eye contact. However...

“...?”

Nothing changed.

“...?”

“Sword of Absolute Death.”

Stab—

“...Urk?”

Once again, Leona’s body received the full brunt of the attack. The reason? It was because Minhyuk had a body with a ‘thousand-poison resistance’ and was invincible against abnormal statuses. Bone-numbing pain once again washed over Leona’s body. Everyone watching the scene was in awe. At the same time, the notifications rang in Minhyuk’s head.

[The entire world is in admiration of your majesty as a king.]

[The guild members and everyone present were left speechless after seeing you do something that no one has ever done before.]

[You have earned 1,004 cash.]

[You have earned 1,310 cash.]

[You have earned 1,681 cash...]

‘Oh?’

Minhyuk saw that he gained 40,000 cash in one go.

‘If I do this well, then...’

A small smile curled at the corner of Minhyuk’s lips. He immediately left Leona behind, who was writhing in pain, and rushed his guild members and troops that were hiding in the cave, “Let’s get out of here as fast as we can.”

“What...?”

“Why...? How...? Beyond the Heavens King, why are you doing this?!”

“You should kill Leona with us!!!”

Seeing Minhyuk and his men running away swiftly made everyone anxious. They felt like they would be able to hunt Leona if the Food God was with them. Instead, the Food God was hurriedly trying to leave with his men.

Everyone was thinking ‘Why?’. However, ‘That’s only natural.’ also floated in their heads. Who were they? They came here to hunt Leona so they could earn the rewards in the form of artifacts and gold, as well as gain fame and honor. That was their choice.

And Food God Minhyuk had decided that he did not want to fight alongside them.

Did he have to fight because it was an unprecedented disaster? That was bullshit. The Beyond the Heavens King had no reason to face such a disaster. He did not need to sacrifice himself and his men for something like that. Considering the level of the guild members that he was leading as well as his troops, nine out of ten would die if they joined this battle. This was the natural choice that a king should make.

‘That’s true. But...’

Richard wanted to get the help of the Food God. He believed that the situation would change if Minhyuk was with them. In fact, Richard’s body was shaking after witnessing the shocking sword dance that Minhyuk displayed earlier. Richard knew that it was only a sneak peek of the true powers of the Food God.

“W, wait.”

Minhyuk did not turn to look back at Richard despite his call. He looked busy taking care of his men. However, he was really just waiting for this call.

‘I’m the only one that is sitting on that throne.’ Minhyuk was actually trying to create this situation. After all, ‘I will help you!’ and ‘Please help us!’ were two entirely different situations when it came to fighting together. Besides, Minhyuk found a new way to earn some cash and he needed to act this out.

Richard called out to him once again, “Wait a minute. Food God! Help us!”

Nice!

Minhyuk stopped in his tracks, then turned to give his order to Centurion Park, “Centurion Park, bring our troops to safety. Full speed.”

“Yes, Your Majesty!”

Minhyuk believed that this was the best decision. The new guild members and the troops were all too weak to fight against Leona.

“What’s the matter?” Minhyuk asked, looking back at Richard.

All of the broadcasting station cameras and the viewers had focused their attention on them.

After sending the whisper, Minhyuk immediately received the code from Orleed. Meanwhile, Richard actually did not know what to say to Minhyuk when he called out to him.

'The Beyond the Heavens' King knows that I'm the culprit behind this mess.'

That was something that was both embarrassing and shameful. However, if they could hunt down Leona with him, they might receive damage but definitely not that much. If they could kill her, at least those that died would be able to receive rewards and the only person that would be disappointed and disgraced would be Richard. However, he was also someone that would become king.

“Join us in Leona’s hunt. You’ll definitely be able to get a lot of spoils.”

“Why should I?”

“...”

Richard was left speechless. After all, why should Minhyuk do so? At this moment, Richard was already thinking of the worst case scenario. Minhyuk was a king and it was necessary for him to put an emerging king in check. He might say those words here.

'All I can do is lower my head.'

Then, all of the viewers would be witness to his disgrace and shame. But at that moment...

“...”

Richard was shocked by the sudden whisper. However, he immediately relaxed after looking at Minhyuk and continued to talk naturally, “Then, are you telling me that you’ll willingly leave all these people behind?”

“The only ones important to me are my people and my men. Why would I care for someone that made their choice to come here?”

But their real conversation was in their whispers.

Just like Richard had expected, Minhyuk was very much aware of everything. The Maserrati Guild had no other choice but to give in and fold. However, it was now a lot easier since they were doing it through whispers.

It was not a bad proposal. It had to be known that the Military Nurturing Parchment was an item that the Absolute Monarch could make only once per year. It was a parchment that would help boost

the development of the army by tripling the soldiers' growth rate for an entire month. Simply put, it was a very valuable parchment. However...

"...!"

Richard was very shocked. Minhyuk wanted to hog all of the spoils of war? This was a highway robbery!

To Richard, Minhyuk was practically committing daylight robbery. He felt cold sweat start to drip down from his forehead. Ironic as it might seem, it was hard to reject Minhyuk's counter offer. After all, it was much better than getting wiped out, receiving penalties, and gaining no EXP.

"...!"

Richard looked at Minhyuk in doubt. The combination of the power of the Absolute Monarch and the power of the Food God? Richard could not understand what Minhyuk meant. The Food God and Richard would not actually shout 'Fusiooooooon!' right?

Once Richard signed the contract, Minhyuk said...

"...!"

Richard's eyes widened. It seemed like Minhyuk did not send him a whisper because he was being considerate!

That was true. However, after their short conversation, Richard could tell that Minhyuk had induced this situation. Then, what was going to happen now? Although Richard was very reluctant, he had no choice but to do as Minhyuk said and speak up in front of the world.

“Please help us, not because of me but because of all the players here. We’re in a situation where all of them risked getting wiped out. Beyond the Heavens’ King, you’re strong, aren’t you? Help them. Please.”

Richard also bowed his head just like what Minhyuk instructed.

All of the players were looking at the two of them in eager anticipation. They all felt that Minhyuk had no obligation nor reason to help. This was because they were unaware of the secrets shared through the whispers.

Minhyuk looked at them. His eyes looked like the epitome of the eyes of a king that was feeling sorry for his wounded and injured people.

‘No. That guy is a thief..’

Richard was left dumbfounded as he watched Minhyuk look at them as if he was in deep agony.

“Hoo...”

Even his sigh seemed to contain his woes as he pondered for quite some time. Then, Minhyuk said to all of the players that were looking at him eagerly, “Fine. I can’t really turn my back on you. Alright. I will fight alongside you.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

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

“He’s really cool...”

“Wow...”

“You’re going to fight alongside us? Wow!!!”

“So amazing... The Beyond the Heavens King is truly a wise king!!!”

That was right. This was how things turned out. And all Richard could do was watch them with a blank and despondent look on his face. Then, Minhyuk raised his hand and prompted everyone to get silent.

“And Richard, you will be a great king. I never expected that you would bow your head for them. I respect that.”

“...!”

At that moment, goosebumps covered Richard’s entire body.

‘This rascal?’

Then, everyone turned to look at Richard. With Minhyuk’s simple words, the gazes of everybody had changed.

Richard was a new and emerging king, yet he bowed his head to the king that was defending his own throne. However, something else was added to that and that was ‘to protect them’. But if Minhyuk did not explicitly mention that, then no one would notice.

‘Just now...’

What Minhyuk just did was to establish his own status, as well as elevate Richard’s own. What did that mean?

‘It means that we are not enemies yet.’

In other words, even if Minhyuk had stolen a lot of things from Maserrati Guild, he was still able to forge a friendly relation with them. However, the most surprising part here was...

‘He just used words but he was able to achieve this much?’

It was terrifying. Indeed, that was...

‘Beyond the Heavens King.’

...Minhyuk.

Chapter 594: Minhyuk’s Connections

[Many people consider you as a true and genuine wise king.]

[You have earned 1,231 cash.]

[You have earned 1,131 cash.]

[You have earned 1,011 cash.]

The notifications of his cash acquisition for the MVP Shop rang in Minhyuk’s ears. He had already decided to fight Leona in the first place, but he was still able to earn a lot with just a few words.

First, Minhyuk was able to secure the loot from the Maserrati Guild. Second, by showing his majesty as a true king, he was able to gain both cash and respect from the people present. And third, by saying those words to Richard, he was able to create a situation where the Maserrati Guild was not their enemy, but an ally. Minhyuk had judged that it was not necessary for Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to recognize them as their enemy, just because they were an emerging kingdom.

Richard, who was looking at Leona’s slowly moving figure, asked, “What did you mean when you said that the Absolute Monarch’s power and the Food God’s power will combine?”

“What is your Absolute Monarch’s Stigma’s current level?”

Richard grimaced. Talking about one’s own class and special skills, especially since he was an Absolute God Class, was a very sensitive topic. However, Richard was also very much aware that this was not the time for him to care about such matters.

“It’s Level 1.”

It was to be expected. After all, only a few days had passed since he changed his class to the Absolute God’s Class, Absolute Monarch. However, the mere existence of a ‘level’ meant that growth was still possible for Richard.

“As expected,” Minhyuk said as he looked at Richard, barely containing the smile that was about to show on his lips.

‘It’s possible. It’s already crazy enough that it’s possible.’

Minhyuk, who saw Richard’s look that was begging him for an answer, said, “Will your Absolute Monarch’s Stigma increase the number of buff targets or will the buff become stronger if it levels up?”

Clever rankers would be able to predict the direction in which their skill would grow in the future. The way to predict it was simple. All they had to do was consider the balance of the game and think about what special privileges the operators of Joy Co. Ltd. would give them.

“I believe the number of people that will be able to receive the stigma will increase. There’s also around 3%~7% expected increase in the buff effect.”

That was right. That was the answer, the extent of what a player could predict.

Then, Minhyuk asked, “What are the conditions to level up the Absolute Monarch’s Stigma?”

Of course, Richard could not tell Minhyuk. For special skills, the concept of leveling up skills using ‘skill proficiency’ would often disappear. However, it would be possible to increase the level of these skills if they could satisfy the conditions that they needed to meet.

A prime example of this was Absolute Monarch’s Stigma. First, he had to have 30,000 guild members or more. Second, he had to have at least dozens of territories under their kingdom’s command. Third, he has to gain victory in a war against another kingdom. And fourth, building an empire. The conditions were completely ridiculous. Although the skill could really be leveled up, it was almost impossible to make it happen. But still, it was Richard’s skill.

“Well, you don’t have to tell me. I can already guess what it is.”

That was right. Minhyuk could already guess that those conditions were completely ridiculous.

“But answer me this, what if your ‘Absolute Monarch’s Stigma’ could temporarily increase by 3~5 levels?”

“...?!”

Richard felt his breath stagnate at the words. He could already tell that the effects of the skill would become strong enough that only the word ‘crazy’ could be used to describe it. Increasing the Absolute Monarch’s Stigma by 3~5 levels? Richard could already expect the effects to be at least 35% stronger than before.

‘If we’re being realistic then...’

Richard believed this to be impossible. However, he was still shocked. Who was the person in front of him? The person in front of him was the player that could make the best buff dishes in Athenae. Just the thought alone was enough to take his breath away.

In a blink of an eye, Leona had already recovered.

“I see what you mean.”

“Yes. Ah, do you have a lot of NPC friends? They have to be strong.”

A small smile curled at the corners of Richard’s lips at the question. One of Richard’s strengths was the fact that he had built a strong relationship with NPCs. In fact, Richard had been pushed back by Food God Minhyuk since earlier. However, this question had definitely brought back his lost pride.

“Of course. If I make the call now, a truck full of people will definitely come. But, why are you asking that?”

“I believe we need the support of the NPCs.”

“Do you want to use the Absolute Monarch Stigma on the NPCs?”

Minhyuk nodded. Because of Leona’s control over the system, the players had been temporarily banned from entering the Stars’ Path. Fortunately, that was not the case for NPCs. Also...

“Leona’s strongest weapon is turning whoever she made eye contact with into stone. Do you think it’s possible for ordinary players to keep their eyes closed while fighting?”

“That would be impossible. However, NPCs that have fought battles since they were young are different. Ah, you want to get the help of Named NPCs at the very least?”

Minhyuk nodded once again. The reason why he wanted to enlist the help of the NPCs? It was because he had seen Ellie fight before. Ellie was a genius that could beat her enemies even with her eyes closed. If genius NPCs of her caliber could gather, then killing Leona would not be difficult. What more if they received the Absolute Monarch’s Stigma?

Richard declared confidently, “So, Named NPCs at the very least? Don’t worry, a huge number of those NPCs will come to my aid. Ah, you, the Beyond the Heavens’ King, will also call for them, right?”

“Of course.”

Richard finally felt better. Why? Although Beyond the Heavens’ King Minhyuk had helped him save his energy and power, it was still true that he suffered a huge humiliation today. However, he was now given the chance to make up for that humiliation. At the very least, Richard was confident that each of the empires, kingdoms and territories that he had connections with would send at least one of their lowest-leveled Named NPCs as reinforcements for him.

‘They will all be amazed.’

After all, dozens of Named NPCs would run to help a player. Richard was sure that the entire world would be in awe and admiration. Of course, he also knew that Minhyuk, as the king of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, would be able to call for a lot of reinforcements. However, Richard had been working hard to promote friendly relationships with the other empires and kingdoms, even resorting to bribing some of them. From what Richard knew, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom rarely resorted to such acts. This made Richard confident that he would receive far more support than them.

“I will kill you all. Especially you,” Leona growled, glaring at Minhyuk after she finished restoring her body and recovering from her wounds.

So, what did Minhyuk do?

“Let’s Have a Meal!”

He created a transparent barrier.

“...”

Well, Minhyuk had to cook, just like what he told Richard earlier, right? And the one that had to hold Leona back while they were waiting for reinforcements and for Minhyuk to cook, would be Richard.

“Fighting,” Minhyuk said, raising his fist at Richard in encouragement.

Richard trembled as he sent a whisper to his guild members still in the American Server.

It was time for them to show the majesty of the Maserrati Guild.

Minhyuk, who was nestled safely inside his ‘Let’s Have a Meal’ barrier, did not intend to show off when he asked Richard to get the help of NPCs. In fact, it was contrary to what Richard was thinking. In fact, he truly wanted their help to win. After all, NPCs truly had stronger powers than them.

‘Come to think of it, there’s that item in the MVP Shop, right?’

Minhyuk saw a very unique item in the MVP Shop.

[A Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You. 30,000 cash.]

The price of the item was quite expensive. However, the Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly for You had a very unusual effect.

‘This bird will fly to the NPCs that have been recognized by the system to have a high degree of favor with me or to those that care about me deeply and will cry for their help.’

Of course, it was possible that some of those NPCs were busy or were in the middle of doing something very important. However, there would also be some that were resting and would choose to come. And Minhyuk did not want everyone that he knew to come. After all, they had their work too.

‘It would be nice if it also had a memo function. What a pity.’

There was also one more thing that Minhyuk found unusual.

‘Cry sadly? What does that mean?’

Nothing was written about that part. Minhyuk saw that the battle between Leona and the Maserrati Guild was about to start again. As he watched the players begin another round of battle, the ‘Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You’ flew into the skies.

Kihyeeeeeeeeeeek—

A bird, enveloped in blinding light, soared in the skies and disappeared in a blink.

‘It would be nice if at least five of them came to help me.’

At that moment, Minhyuk was still unaware of the impact that the Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You would have.

Cali was the one in charge of the Maserrati Guild’s diplomatic relations. Although the Maserrati Guild has not yet been crowned a kingdom, he was already working hard on forging relationships and improving their friendly ties with other empires and kingdoms. He even spent a lot of money to achieve it.

Estio Empire’s emperor listened silently to Cali’s request for a reinforcement of their strongest NPC and soldiers. Richard had met a few times with this very same emperor, and even toasted quite a few glasses of wine together.

“I believe this is an ordeal that the Maserrati Guild must overcome to become a kingdom.”

“...?!”

Cali immediately understood what the emperor meant.

‘I am not willing to sacrifice the lives of my precious soldiers just for you.’

Anger soared in Cali’s head. He had spent a ton of money on them for this?! The emperor even laughed with them and toasted them?! But everything was for naught. After that, Cali went on to several empires and kingdoms.

Airede Empire.

“But my soldiers are on vacation?”

Caina Kingdom.

“Leave! How dare you ask for my help already?!”

Vleid Kingdom.

“Our Archer of Light Riel suffered an injury on his index finger yesterday...”

Many kingdoms and empires turned a blind eye to Maserrati Guild’s plight. Cali’s anger grew with each rejection. He was sure that each empire would have at least fifty Named NPCs. For kingdoms? At least five. However, they did not even offer any support, even if they had that many men under their command?

Cali realized, *‘No matter what we do, in the end, the NPCs will not recognize foreigners like us...’*

This was the reality of the matter. Just when Cali's shoulders started to droop in disappointment, a thick and callused hand patted him on the shoulder. The man was none other than Sword Master Verr.

In the entire world, only two people could be called Sword Masters. One was Marquis Loumat, the one that tried to hold a ritual to summon Great Demon Verus with Crazy Tyrant Akhan. Marquis Loumat died under Minhyuk's hands. The other one was none other than Verr. Of course, they were not true and complete Sword Masters. However, they were given that title because they have reached the highest level of the sword.

Verr might have the same title as Marquis Loumat but he was much stronger; a true master hiding in seclusion. He was going to be the next Absolute Supreme NPC to appear.

'However, Richard won their hearts.'

Even though many kingdoms and empires turned their backs on Richard, he still had Verr on his side. Besides, not all of the kingdoms turned their backs on them. Behind Verr stood the Absolute NPCs that Richard had secretly met over the course of the year and made connections with. They had around 13 Named NPCs and one NPC that was set to become an Absolute Supreme NPC. There were also around 200,000 troops that had decided to help Maserrati Guild.

"Let's depart."

At Verr's words, everyone kicked their horses and started running at high speed.

Cali thought, *'The Beyond the Heavens' King's eyes will grow so wide that they would fall out.'*

'I believe Richard will be able to raise his head proudly.'

At the same time, in the Demon World.

After Great Demon Verus had been sealed, another Great Demon made their appearance and started to take control over the entirety of the Demon World. This Great Demon's name was none other than 'Gremory'.

Gremory had forged a connection with Minhyuk in the past. She had been in awe of the jjajangmyeon that he made for her back then. And this very same Gremory was now in control of half of the entire Demon World. She had become the master of more than tens of millions of Demon World Corps. And all of this...

'It's all because of that child, Minhyuk. It's because he sealed the Great Demon Verus.'

Gremory had a huge crush, no gratitude, on Minhyuk. She wanted to repay him, but how could she ever do so? But then, at that moment, inside the dark and dull Demon World, a space suddenly opened up and a beautiful bird emitting a white light flew out of it.

"...What the hell?"

Gremory was flustered. How did a bird enter the Demon World? It was even a beautiful one to boot. But, the bird cried mournfully the moment it arrived.

"Kihyeeeeee! Kihyeeeeee!!!"

Then, a notification rang in Gremory's ears.

[Minhyuk is requesting your help.]

"...?!"

Requesting her help? Gremory's answer to that was of course a resounding yes. However, she had a lot of work to do right now.

"Kihyeeeeee! Kihyeeeeee! Kihyeeeeee!!!"

"..."

The bird enveloped in light cried loudly as it flew vigorously around before landing on the ground in front of Gremory and shaking its head sadly. Seeing the bird's gestures and tears, Gremory realized, "He's, he's in great danger?!"

She could even see the urgency of the matter as the bird continued to cry. From what it looked like, the bird had been crying for a long time and would faint at any moment. It was showing her how dangerous the situation was on Minhyuk's side since he sent this bird.

Then, at that moment, Great Demon Gremory rose from her throne and stood in front of the 150,000 Demon World Corps that were on standby. She ordered, "Prepare for war!!!"

The demon race were born with stronger physiques compared to humans. So, if one had to base them on the humans' standard of Named NPCs, the number of Named NPCs that Gremory was leading was around 1,000. At this moment, the Demon World Corps was about to make their debut in the human world.

As for the Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You...

Grin—

There was a cunning twinkle in its eyes, as it disappeared in a flash of light and headed to another place.

Chapter 595: Minhyuk's Connections

Isbin Village was the very first village that the players who just started playing Athenae could visit, right after they finished their scarecrow training and basic hunting training. The village was literally filled with beginners. However, there was a 'hidden master' living in this village, under the guise of an 'instructor'. A man, who was looking at his sleeping four year old daughter, smiled happily. This man was none other than 'Valen'. Valen patted his daughter's head and came out to the living room and saw Roina pouring warm tea in a cup.

'What a happy life.'

For a large part of his life, Valen lived under the name of the Sword God. After that exhausting life, he came to settle down in Isbin Village and had led a lonely life since then. However, a child named Minhyuk appeared in front of him, visited his house, and even made delicious food for him. And that was not all. The child even connected him and Roina.

"Why are you smiling like that?"

"I just... I just thought of Minhyuk. I haven't seen him in quite a long time."

A small smile also hung at the corner of Roina's lips at the thought of the boy. But then, at that moment...

"Kihyeeeeeeeeee!"

A loud and mysterious cry suddenly rang from outside their house. The two immediately hurried out, only to see a restless and weeping bird.

"This bird..."

It was obvious that the bird in front of them was a mythical creature that only appeared in the myths. But, why was the bird here?

[Minhyuk is requesting your help.]

"...!"

"...!"

The couple looked at each other after hearing the same notifications. On top of that, the bird looked as if it would faint any moment after flying urgently for so long.

"Minhyuk must be in great danger."

"We must prepare quickly," Valen said as he turned around and prepared as quickly as he could.

Valen was once known as the Sword God. He came out wearing stylish full-plate armor and a sharp sword on his waist. As for Roina? She was a rare genius that fought on the battlefield alongside Sword God Valen. She came out wearing red leather armor and a weapon in her hand, all ready to leave. The couple mounted their horses together, then rode off as fast as they could.

Warrior's Nation, Lumae Kingdom.

Back when Overlord Raldo was still under a deep sleep, Prince Votto raised a military force in Lumae Kingdom and fought a war against the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. The result? It was a complete and utter defeat for the Lumae Kingdom. Of course, that was because Overlord Raldo did not participate.

Now, Prince Votto was held captive in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. However, the reality was different. It was just a disguise that Minhyuk devised to protect Prince Votto and promote a friendly relationship between the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and Lumae Kingdom.

"One."

"Haaaaa!"

"Two."

"Yaaaaah!"

"Three."

“Haaaaaaa!”

King Raldo was training the elite knights of Lumae Kingdom. King Raldo was able to realize a lot of things during the war back then. He wanted to create a stronger nation. That was why he was still training the soldiers and the knights, even though he was already well over fifty and was already ready to settle down. The result of that decision was very shocking. A huge number of Named NPC was thus born in their kingdom.

Lumae Kingdom was actually the smallest kingdom in the entire Asgan Continent. However, the number of Named NPC in their troops could rival that of the Eivelis Empire. On top of that, the soldiers that Raldo nurtured were true powerhouses. The forces of the other empires and kingdoms could not compare at all.

Also, Overlord Raldo was able to split the Overlord Technique with Minhyuk. This meant that he only had half of the skill. However, compared to when he had the complete Overlord Technique, Raldo was able to become an ‘Absolute Supreme NPC’ and was now standing shoulder to shoulder with Ellie.

After Raldo finished the military training, he headed straight to Votto’s room in Lumae Kingdom. Votto was obviously detained in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom as a prisoner of war. However, Minhyuk was considerate of their circumstances and decided to secretly send Votto home once or twice a month.

Raldo immediately hugged Votto when he saw him, “Son.”

“Father.”

Originally, the relationship between Raldo and Votto was very strained. Back then, Raldo was very obsessed with polishing himself and grinding his skills. On the other hand, Votto just wanted to win the admiration and respect of the kingdom. But after the war, and with Minhyuk’s help, the two were able to reflect on their relationship and become closer.

The two dined together, Votto’s eyes sparkling as he spoke excitedly, “Spear God Ben is incredibly strong. Even the coffee that he brews is superb. I really want to share a cup with my father sometime in the future.”

“Hahaha. You brat. Is the Beyond the Heavens’ King alright with you telling this father of yours the secret of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?”

“It’s going to be fine. After all, father is father. Ah, they also have a cure for baldness over there...”

Raldo felt like he would not have any regrets even if he died now. He was now living a very happy life. All Raldo wanted was to continue living like this, completely abandoning his obsession on becoming strong and spending time with his son, while having fun and eating delicious food together.

‘*Thank you.*’

It was a silent thanksgiving to Minhyuk. Just then, at that moment, a bird engulfed with a bright light flew inside the room.

[Minhyuk is requesting your help.]

Raldo and Prince Votto looked at the bird. The bird was rolling on the ground while weeping bitterly. Seeing the bird act like that, Raldo realized that something strange had happened. The two stood up from their seats silently.

Raldo immediately grabbed the sword that he had used for decades and hung it on his waist. He also draped his black cloak bearing the pattern of a sword and a spear crossed together, a pattern that symbolized Lumae Kingdom, on his back.

An hour later, around fifty elite Lumae Kingdom knights wearing black armor and horned helmets appeared silently. All fifty of them were Named NPCs that had the power of the legends. The next moment, 50,000 of Lumae Kingdom's troops appeared, with their breaths fanning hotly in front of their faces.

Raldo, with his golden full-plate armor and black cloak, stood beside his son, Votto. Then, a loud horn blared as he gave the order, "Depart."

Saintess Loyna was someone that God of Origin Athenae had sent to the world. She was the most iconic figure in the entire Athenae worldview. Even her beauty was known to be comparable to that of the Goddess of Beauty, Ipelé.

This very same Loyna almost died at the hands of a demon worshipper, and the one that saved her was none other than 'Minhyuk'. Back then, Loyna's position was weak and had no power at all. Several popes from all over the world did not even recognize her existence.

But everything was different now. After going through that near-death experience, she had become stronger and more firm in her decision. She personally met with the popes from all over the world and won their hearts. Then, as a reward for her hard work, she obtained one of the 'Saintess' authority, Paladin Sovereign.

What was the Paladin Sovereign? It was an authority that would give her the power to call for and command all of the paladins from all over the world.

Loyna, who was praying earnestly in front of Athenae's statue, saw the urgency and distress of the weeping bird that flew in front of her. It seemed like Minhyuk was in very great danger right now. Loyna immediately prayed. But the prayer was not a regular prayer.

"God of Origin Athenae, your child that has inherited your power and her friend are in grave danger. I, Saintess Loyna, earnestly pray that all of the paladins that can fight gather for me and my dear friend."

Loyna, wearing her white priestly robe, continued to pray for a very long time. After two hours, she walked out of the prayer room. When she placed both of her hands together, a bright light burst out. From within that bright light, a man walked out.

The man was known as the paladin that was always ready for battle, 'Sword Saint Ruido'. He was the representative knight of all of the paladins and was known for having a power that was far higher than any of the Absolute NPCs.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of lights appeared in front of Loyna, with paladins coming out of them to gather at her call. There were around 1,000 Named NPCs among the paladins present. The number was not that surprising; in the first place, one had to be stronger than a knight to become a 'Paladin'. On top of that, they were required to have a mastery over holy power. Simply put, the qualifications to become a paladin were high.

And that was not all. There were also paladins that were already rushing straight towards their destination. Today, the power of Athenae Religion's Saintess Loyna was going to make its debut in the world.

Beyond the Heavens Vice Guild Master Genie saw the message that Minhyuk wrote in the guild chat.

Along with that, a separate whisper arrived in Genie's inbox.

Genie understood what Minhyuk meant. Each and every single individual in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had a job to do. They just could not afford to have them leave their posts arbitrarily. That was why Minhyuk ordered her to send only the minimum number of NPCs.

Genie hurriedly ran out to inform the NPCs about this. However...

Fwooooooosh—

...someone suddenly shot by her. The man was carrying a single spear on his body and was running so fast that Genie could not follow him with her eyes.

"Your Majeeeeeeeeeeesty!!! This servant of yours will come and save you!!!"

"..."

Then, he disappeared.

'Let's, let's have Grandpa Ben be the first person. I should quickly let the others know.'

But just when the thought passed through Genie's head...

Fwoosh—

Fwoooooosh—

Fwoooooosh—

Someone passed by her once again. Leading them was...

"Daring to touch... His Majesty... Bastard... I won't let you go...!"

...the one hailed as Lesser Demon Diablo before. He was currently serving as Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's Shield. The usual innocent expression on Elpis' face had disappeared and exchanged with a vicious and devilish expression. And right behind him...

"Some f*cking bastard dared to touch His Majesty...!"

...was the man hailed as the Great Pirate. Gorfido, the great fisherman, was hot behind Elpis. But was that all?

"Conir!!! Your Majesty!!! Save!!!"

Conir was also following right behind them.

"All of you, stop!!! This is an order!!!"

But Genie's voice did not register in their ears.

"..."

However, something even more surprising happened next.

"How dare that bastard lay their hands on His Majesty?!"

"I won't let you go...!"

"All of us are living a happy life because of His Majesty!!!"

"How dare that bastard!!!"

Even the citizens and the soldiers began to stir.

The Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You, flew and appealed to every single NPC that truly cared for Minhyuk. And Minhyuk's citizens absolutely adored him, so this reaction was acceptable. Besides, Minhyuk would cook delicious food for his people every once in a while. He was also the one that allowed them to live a happy and carefree life.

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"Let's goooooo!!!"

The citizens immediately armed themselves with their farming tools, while the soldiers began to strap their weapons. It was as if they were truly going to war.

"Stop!!! All of you are banned from going to war!!!"

A terrible headache washed over Genie's head as she called for the kingdom's citizens and told them the words that Minhyuk told her. But the citizens?

"That bird told us just now that His Majesty is in danger!!!"

"Why did the bird cry so sadly and bitterly if His Majesty is not in grave danger then?!!!"

“Marquess Genie!!! Please allow us to go to war!!!”

“Don’t tell me...? Did His Majesty tell that to Marquess Genie because he’s afraid that we would be in danger?”

“Huhuhuhuhuhu!”

“...That’s, that’s not it at all!”

“Let’s go save his Majesty!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!”

“Prepare for waaaaaaaaaar!!!”

“...”

Genie thought that Minhyuk was truly a good king. Despite knowing this fact, she heaved a great sigh of exasperation.

“You’re all driving me crazy...”

Chapter 596: Minhyuk’s Connections

Elven Forest.

A new king had been crowned among the elves after the previous elven king Gorn stepped down and passed his mantle to Argon. Once he had received the crown, Argon thought that they could not continue living like this. If the elves continued to live a secluded life, cut off from all communications and interactions with other races, they would not be able to receive help if their elven forest were to experience danger again. That was mainly the reason why he was now enjoying a cup of tea together with the Dragon King.

Behind each king stood a hundred thousand of their troops. They were the troops that went to help Minhyuk before and fought together. And now, the creatures of the deep sea and the elves were meeting and socializing frequently.

“This tea tastes divine. What’s this tea called?”

Argon’s lips curled a bit as he answered the Dragon King’s question, who was taking another sip of the tea, “Cow dung tea.”

“Why did you name the tea cow dung tea?”

“Because it’s made by drying cow dung and turning it into tea.”

“...”

The Dragon King could not help but place down his cup swiftly. He already knew that the elves loved nature.

.

The two were also visited by the Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You. The two kings did not delay after hearing the bird’s sad and mournful cry.

“Gather all of the high elves.”

“Kiari, Jevis. Gather the troops.”

The kings of two races began to call for their troops.

The high elves were outstanding elves that were on the Named NPC level. The number of high elves under Argon’s command were at a hundred. The creatures of the sea had about the same number as them. Especially the werebeasts, Kiari and Jevis, they were beings at the level of an Absolute NPC. Then, what about Argon and the Dragon King? The two were beings that had strength close to an Absolute Supreme NPC.

There were eight beings in the continent that could be hailed as the Absolute Supreme NPCs. ‘Force’ was not the only thing that was considered when determining who was on that level. Those beings should also have a huge influence and impact on the vast Athenae worldview in the future to come. Those were the Absolute Supreme NPCs.

And now, the troops of the two races stood under a united front and began their march toward the Stars’ Path.

With the birth of the Stars’ Path, every kingdom and empire from all over the world were on high alert. Now that everyone could move easily to other continents, staging a war between continents was no longer impossible.

Sword Emperor Ellie, the empress of Eivelis Empire, had received a huge tip from Minhyuk, ‘*A man named Nerva Sephiroth will forcefully take the entire continent under his rule and command everyone through fear.*’

Ellie took Minhyuk’s tip to heart and had already started preparing and nurturing her army so that they could become stronger. Right now, she was sitting on her throne while cradling her sword in her arms. Of course, the Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You also visited her.

Seeing the bird, Ellie slowly rose from her throne. An immense pressure bore down on the surroundings with every step that she took. Finally, she opened the doors and walked out of the ramparts. There, she saw millions of troops lined up in a neat order.

“Depart for battle.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Eivelis Empire had begun their march to war.

Orodith Kingdom was one of the kingdoms located in Asgan Continent. Among the several kingdoms established in the Asgan Continent, the kingdom’s influence and position was very small. In this kingdom existed a noble with an infamous nickname: Bed Wetter. This man was none other than Marquis Arna, the man that felt the majesty of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and peed himself, twice.

Marquis Arna sought an audience with his king, Eren, and asked him, “Your Majesty! We have to send our troops to war!!!”

King Eren was in trouble. The reason why Marquis Arna was being like this was because he had heard rumors that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's King was on the verge of death. After hearing this, without even wearing any shoes, Marquis Arna immediately ran out to meet with the king.

Marquis Arna was the one that had personally experienced the might and majesty of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. That was why he was fully aware of the importance of forging a friendly relationship with Beyond the Heavens.

“Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is enjoying rapid growth thanks to the various specialties that they are offering. If our Orodith Kingdom starts to interact with them and forge a friendly relationship, our kingdom can also develop rapidly!!!!”

King Eren pondered deeply before slowly nodding, “That must certainly be the case, Marquis Arna. Especially since you ended up peeing whenever you went there.”

Screech!

“...”

“You're the one with the firmest will and toughest heart in our kingdom yet you've faced humiliation and defeat twice in that place.”

Screech!

“...”

“And now that you've realized a lot of things, you understand how important it is to make friends with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.”

Screech!

“...”

“Very well, we'll send our troops there.”

“Th, thank you for your grace, Your Majesty!!!!”

Marquis Arna, who was bowing his head in gratitude, felt heartbroken deep inside, *‘There's no way I'll wet my pants today!’*

Richard was currently contemplating. Around 20,000 of the remaining 70,000 troops were annihilated in the hands of Leona, the God of Snakes Elizabeth's child.

“Until when do I have to wait?”

“It's only been fifteen minutes.”

“...”

Richard's face turned ugly after hearing Minhyuk's words. Even a second felt like an hour. And he was even made aware of the direness of their situation after hearing Minhyuk, who was inside his

Let's Have a Meal barrier, say that only fifteen minutes had passed. This was because 20,000 of their troops had been massacred in just that short amount of time.

"F*ck."

Then...

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Baaaaaang!

One of the vipers hanging on Leona's head moved, stretching through thousands of meters of land to bite at Richard's neck. Richard saw thousands of players being pierced through by this single attack and disappearing into flashes of gray as he struggled against it.

'When will the reinforcements come?!'

Richard heard from Cali that the reinforcements were already on their way here. Then, another of Leona's special skills was cast. Tens of thousands of eyes once again appeared in all directions!

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

The players began to harden and turn to stones. As for the players that did not turn to stones, vipers stretched out and pierced through their bodies. They were helpless. Then, an ominous sound rang in Richard's ears. He could not see anything since he closed his eyes tightly to avoid looking at Leona's eyes.

"Hiiiiiiiiiiisss—"

It was the sound of a snake hissing. Richard knew that the viper was fast approaching, ready to pierce through his heart. However, he could not avoid it even with his eyes wide open.

'Damn!'

At that moment...

Splaaaaaaaash—

The viper's blood splashed on his face. Then...

"Sword's Judgment."

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

Six sword lights flew and struck Leona's body.

"Ugh!" Leona groaned as the tens of thousands of eyes disappeared.

Richard smiled pleasantly. When he opened his eyes, Verr, a being close to becoming a Sword Master and an Absolute Supreme NPC, was there. There were also several Named NPCs standing right next to him along with a large army that was almost 200,000 in number. Their eyes were showing a fierce and vicious glint through the gaps of their helmets.

"Sir Verr...!"

“I hope I wasn’t too late.”

Richard was deeply moved. At this moment, he felt as if he did not live his life in vain. The troops that came looked very formidable. However, the most important ones were the Named NPCs and Verr.

The whole world must be watching them now. They would see how a single player was able to gather nearly 200,000 NPC troops, more than ten Named NPCs and a being closest to becoming an Absolute Supreme NPC. What was more, the NPCs of the Maserrati Guild have not yet arrived. They had around five Named NPCs under their command.

The entire world was shocked.

[Amazing. A player has actually gathered those NPCs even though they aren’t NPCs associated with their guild.]

[It seems like the soldiers came from different nations based on the patterns on their armor. There are even some that are wearing ordinary and plain clothes. It seems like those ones do not belong to any nation or empire.]

[The most important one there is Verr. He is a strong NPC, and almost everyone in the world knows of his name. Given that he came running after the Maserrati Guild asked for help, we can already see the influence that the guild has.]

[The fact that a player could win the hearts of NPCs... This is something that’s worthy of our admiration.]

Then...

“We’re late.”

“Sorry.”

Another five people, carrying incredible momentum, appeared. They were none other than the pillars of the Maserrati Guild, the five Named NPCs under their command.

“Ha, hahaha!”

Richard laughed loudly at the sight of his comrades, his eyes automatically turning to where Minhyuk was, *‘Are you seeing this, Food God? This is my strength, my power!’*

Richard was not an arrogant man by nature. He was someone that dreamt of becoming a king that was partial toward the weak and strong against the strong. But today, he was very proud after gaining an upper hand over the Beyond the Heavens’ King.

‘I will be the one and true king!’

He would win all of the NPCs’ hearts in every continent, make friends with them, and become their emperor!

Leona pulled out the six sword lights that were stuck in her body. Richard seemed to have forgotten his fear for a moment. But he should not have. Even if he had close to twenty Named NPCs behind him, the woman in front of him could not be underestimated. After all, she was Elizabeth’s child.

Leona looked at the people in front of her in interest. She could feel a strong force emanating from those that were standing in the vanguard.

‘Are they the ones that the humans called legends?’

This was a world where humans could become legends and even be gods. Leona’s gaze drifted toward Minhyuk, who was inside a transparent barrier.

‘He’s the one I have to keep my eye on the most.’

Leona did not know what the man was preparing but she knew that it was dangerous. In the end, Leona made her decision.

“Do you know my mother’s name?” She stood in front of the 200,000 troops that blocked her path and asked. Of course, the 200,000 troops were stationed very far, and only the almost 20 Named NPCs were standing directly in front of her. “It’s Elizabeth. Do you know what god she is?”

“...”

Everyone silently prepared for whatever attack was coming their way, wary of every single muscle. And Leona? She giggled at them.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk, who was cooking inside the barrier, looked up with an ugly expression on his face.

“Wait, don’t tell me...!”

Minhyuk had cut off the vipers acting as Leona’s hair that allowed her to command the Snake Soldiers. Everyone believed that it was the one that gave her the power to summon the soldiers. In fact, her hair had not regenerated even now. But it seemed like it was nothing but a shell, a disguise.

“My mother is the God of Snakes,” Leona said as she gracefully raised her slender arms. Then...

Rumble, rumble, rumble, rumble—

The surroundings began to shake as Leona received Elizabeth’s power to take over the system and rule over all of the snakes.

“We have to stop her,” Verr said, his feet trying to move as fast as he could. However...

Baaaaaaaang—

Boooooooooooooooooom—

Thuuuuuuuuuuud—

A tornado formed as something huge rose from the ground. Whatever it was surrounded Leona and blocked Verr and the Named NPCs’ way to approach her.

“Snake...?”

“They’re all snakes, right?”

That was right. They were all poisonous snakes clustered together rising to a height of forty meters and a width of ten meters. Thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of them appeared and spun fiercely like a tornado. Then, Leona gracefully pointed her arms down toward the ground.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Thuuuuuuuuuuuud—

Baaaaaaaaaaaam—

The millions of snakes that made up the surging tornado dived down and occupied the ground.

“Step back!!!”

“Move!!! Quick!!!”

“Hiiiiiiik!”

“A, aaaaaaaack!”

“Hisssssss—”

“Hisssssss—”

The snakes fell down on the heads of the players and NPCs, leaving them in a mess. A total of 1.2 million snakes fell down and slithered on the ground beneath their feet.

At the same time, Verr murmured, “The true power of the God of Snakes is not her force. Her true power was the fact that she is the mother of snakes...”

Verr’s face was ugly as he mumbled those words. His breathing turned rough and haggard the moment he saw the shocking display in front of him. A 1.2 million strong army with the head of a dragon and the scales of the snake appeared in front of them. Considering that a Snake Soldier could easily deal with at least one decent ranker the other day, it could be said that their current situation was truly a terrible one.

“Do you know this great one’s name?” Leona asked arrogantly as the 1.2 million Snake Soldiers lined up behind her.

Richard shook his head, *‘I shouldn’t have called them here...’*

He could tell that everyone here would die. Even the Named NPCs that came here for his sake would die. He and the other players might be able to come back to life, but that was not the case for the NPCs.

Richard immediately made a decision, “Sir Verr, please run away!!! We, we will stop them!!! Players, please help me buy them some time! We have to stop them!!!”

Richard cried desperately to protect the NPCs. Hearing his cry, Leona grinned viciously and said, “This great one is Elizabeth’s child, the one that will become the God of Origin, Leona.”

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

The 1.2 million strong troops began to move, a bloody energy surging all over the place and surrounding Leona. Everyone fell in despair. They knew that this army would kill everyone.

Richard felt extremely frustrated, the players were crying in despair and even Verr could not hide his embarrassment. But then...

“Do you know this great one’s name?”

...they heard an unfamiliar voice ring. The voice that faded away into nothingness sounded so beautiful and charming.

Not long after, a tremendous amount of black demonic energy fell from somewhere and devoured the bloody energy that surged and surrounded Leona’s body. Then, the space right in front of Leona split apart, an explosion of demonic energy accompanying it.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

[Caution!]

[Danger!]

[Caution!]

[Danger!]

[Caution!]

[Danger...]

[A great presence that can encompass the world is descending!]

A woman wearing red leather armor with a red whip hanging on her waist walked out of the space. The moment the woman raised her arm, a huge amount of demonic energy appeared and turned into the form of a hand that grabbed Leona’s neck.

Grab!

“Keuhaaaaaaaaaack!”

Leona shrieked, her expression clearly showing how flustered she was. At the same time, tens of thousands of demons and demonic beasts appeared behind the woman.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Graaaaaaaaaaaa!”

The lips of the black beauty curled beautifully as she said, “This great one is Great Demon Gremory.”

“...!”

“...!”

Chapter 597: Minhyuk’s Connections

Richard was very frustrated. He worked hard to become close with these NPCs. To be exact, he considered them as his 'friends' in this virtual reality game. But his friends were now going to die because of his stupid mistake. Once the NPCs in Athenae die, they would never be able to revive. It was similar to death in reality. That was why their death meant eternal farewell.

Richard knew that he had to stop and prevent their deaths no matter the cost. But no matter what he did, he could not think of a way to do so. All they could do was to watch the 1.2 million Snake Soldiers charge forward to annihilate them.

But before the enemies could approach, the space in front of them was torn apart as a black beauty appeared and said, "This great one is Great Demon Gremory."

"...!"

"...!"

Richard's eyes widened in shock.

Great Demon Gremory!!! That was a name that he heard a lot about. After Great Demon Verus had been sealed by the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, the power and influence of the 72 Devils had weakened. During that time, a demon led her own demon tribe and occupied more than half of the Demon World, aiming for the seat of the Demon King.

That great being's name was none other than Great Demon Gremory.

"H, how...?"

This was the question that floated in everyone's head. Everyone saw Great Demon Gremory as a great disaster. No one present believed that Great Demon Gremory was their ally.

'Is it because she has to take over middle earth and not Leona?'

That was right. This was the more realistic thinking. It was more believable to think that Gremory decided that it was better for her to absorb the Stars' Path than Leona, right?

Then, Gremory turned to look where Minhyuk was. Her eyes looked both terrifying and breathtaking. However, there was an unmistakable gentleness in those eyes. Gremory had eaten a dish called 'ganjjajang' that Minhyuk made for her in the past, and completely fell in love with the taste of the dish.

'Just one look at this guy and my mouth is already watering.'

But she had not seen Minhyuk for a while. In other words, she had not eaten his food for so long. However, she had suddenly appeared. It would be weird if she immediately said, 'I want to eat your food...' right away. She would definitely be a laughing stock.

So, Gremory smiled as brightly as she could and said the words that the humans often said when they wanted to get closer to each other, "Minhyuk, how have you been? I came running because you called."

The impact of her words was tremendous.

"Keok...!"

“Wh, what...”

“...You’re lying, right?”

“...”

The surviving players, the members of the Maserrati Guild, and even the Named NPCs were all stunned speechless. Great Demon Gremory came running at the call of a human? It was unbelievable since it was something that had never happened at all.

And Richard? He was vehemently denying the impact Gremory has. After all, the truth of the situation in front of them was far too shocking.

‘The NPC that the Beyond the Heavens’ King had called is Gremory? R, right. That’s possible. But he’s only able to call one being. I called 20 Named NPCs, you know? Haha...?’
Richard tried to console himself.

If it was enough to surprise them, what more the commentators and viewers that were tuned in to the scene?

[The great demon that is a candidate to become demon king is close to the Beyond the Heavens’ King...?]

[Did you see her smile? That’s the expression of someone that wants to become close with the other...]

[Crazy...]

[But who do you think will win if Leona and Gremory fought?]

[‘Course, the Great Demon. Keke.]

That was right. Just like the viewers said, in a fight between Great Demon Gremory and the child of the God of Snakes Elizabeth, one of the Six God Monsters, Leona, the one that would come on top would definitely be Gremory.

However, that was only possible if it was in the ‘Demon World’.

“How dare a demon like you... humiliate me when we’re on earth!” Leona shouted as she lifted both of her hands and canceled the demonic energy in the surroundings.

Indeed, demons and demonic beasts could not exert their full strength when they were in the land above. Just like with Great Demon Verus. He fought against the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom with 50% of his powers sealed. Simply put, great demons were unable to display the true extent of their powers in the human realm. The same was true for Great Demon Gremory and her grand army.

“Kill those damn demon trash!!!” Leona ordered, her eyes flashing red.

“As expected... She’s dangerous,” Great Demon Gremory murmured bitterly.

“Hiiiiiiisss!!!”

“Hiiiiiiisss!”

“Hiiiiisss!”

“Kihyeeeeeeck!”

“Kihyaaaaaaaaack!”

“Graaaaaaaaa!”

Nearly 1.2 million Snake Soldiers and more than 100,000 demon soldiers hissed and roared at each other. The fierce battle began when one of the demons charged and attacked one of the Snake Soldiers on the head.

Immediately after, Leona’s shining eyes flashed and extended toward the Demon World Corps. The moment the red light touched the demons...

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

...they began to harden and turn into stones.

“...She could have turned us into stones even if we don’t look her in the eyes.”

Of course, it was an AOE skill. Once cast, it could only be used again after a long period of time. But what would happen if the entire Demon World Corps turned into stones? It would be a page in history that would mark the greatest humiliation that Great Demon Gremory suffered. It would mean that she lost to Leona on the grounds above. But...

“I am not someone that a mere snake’s daughter can deal with.”

And when Gremory swung her whip...

Crack—

Black demonic energy surged up and devoured the red light that Leona released.

“...!”

Leona’s eyes widened in shock. The demon in front of her could still devour her abilities even when she was weakened? But not long after, Leona smirked at her. Even if Gremory was strong, she would not be able to stop the 1.2 million Snake Soldiers that were creeping up and slaughtering her Demon World Corps. After all, there was no way for them to fight against the Snake Soldiers with their 50% handicap.

“Your army will be devoured by my children.”

“Well, that might be possible,” Gremory said, shrugging her shoulders. It was something that anyone present could see. Then, she turned to look back at Minhyuk.

“...???”

Minhyuk, who was busy cooking, looked at Gremory in confusion when he saw her suddenly look back at him. Then, Gremory chuckled softly and said, “However, you did something that you should never have done.”

“...?”

“You brought that human child to the brink of death.”

“...???”

Leona could not understand what Gremory meant.

‘What kind of bullshit is that?’

She had never attacked the human. In fact, it was Minhyuk, who cut off her hair of vipers and stabbed her with ‘Sword of Frenzy’ and ‘Sword of Absolute Death’, before hiding away inside a barrier. It was as if he came here to tease her and annoy her. In other words, the one that was almost beaten to the brink of death was Leona.

“I... to that human...”

“Did you know? Something terrible will happen to you if you touch a single hair of that human child?”

“No. I have never even touched...”

“Now, keep your eyes wide open and look.”

“No, that’s why I’m telling you...”

Leona felt extremely wronged.

‘No! I was not even able to touch a single hair on that guy! In fact, I was the one that got hit and beaten!’

But then, Gremory looked up at the skies with a wide smile on her face and said, “The first disaster has arrived.”

Everything happened so suddenly. The once blue skies had suddenly turned white. When Leona lifted her head and looked up, she saw a forty meter long sword falling down from the skies.

“...!”

At the same time, a man and a woman appeared in a flash behind Gremory. The man had one arm raised to the skies while the woman beside him was glaring fiercely at Leona, a fierce momentum covering her body.

Then, the man said, “Do you know this great one’s name?”

“...”

Leona was left dumbfounded. Were they waiting for their turn to appear?!

‘I’m sure of it! After all, these bastards are saying the same words that I said earlier...!’

But after the daze, Leona realized that a disaster was about to fall on her.

“This great one is the Sword God!”

“...?!”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Everyone was shocked. Then, the forty meter long sword fell amidst the Snake Soldier army. It was like a nuclear bomb. Anything and everything within a fifty meter radius, including all of the Snake Soldiers, were annihilated the moment the sword struck down on the ground.

The entire world was shocked. This was the advent of a true 'god', an event that no player had ever witnessed before. As the sword fell down, the man said, "I heard that you were trying to kill that young man over there?"

"N, no. I..."

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

In just one second, the Sword God stabbed his sword six times. Leona, who was caught defenseless, felt the green blood spurt out from her body, her knees touching the ground as her body collapsed.

Valen and Roina immediately turned around and attacked the Snake Soldier army. With every brandish of Roina and Valen's swords, tens of Snake Soldiers would fall. However, there were just too many of them. In fact, it was still hard even for the Demon World Corps to get the upperhand in this battle.

Meanwhile, Leona, whose body was covered in green blood as she regenerated and recovered her wounds, felt really, *really* wronged. At the same time, she felt humiliated and disgraced.

"How dare...!"

But then...

"Do you know this great one's name?"

"..."

"This great one is Spear God Ben."

Then, the man turned toward the Snake Soldier army and cast an attack with tremendous power.

"Absolute Pinnacle Spear."

A spear made of light fell down from the skies at the speed of light and dropped in the middle of the Snake Soldier army.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash—

The single attack devoured thousands of the Snake Soldiers. At the same time, the man's spear stabbed through the heart of the kneeling Leona.

Stab—

"Keoheok!"

"Did you just try to kill His Majesty?"

"Urk... I... his hair..."

“Shut up,” Old Man Ben spat coldly as he roughly pulled the spear from Leona’s chest. Then, he immediately turned around and jumped into the fray of the Snake Soldier army.

Tears were now welling up in Leona’s eyes.

‘I... I... really... did not touch him...!’

Why wouldn’t they believe her? She was the one that got hit by Minhyuk!

‘Anyway, from now on...’

Leona believed that there would not be anyone else coming, right? There was also one thing that she found strange.

‘Why are they giving me enough time to recover?’

That was right. After inflicting tremendous damage on Leona’s body, they would immediately turn around and attack the Snake Soldier army.

‘Right, it’s just a coincidence.’

The thought flashed in Leona’s head as her body gradually recovered. But then...

“Do you know this great one’s name?”

“...”

Leona was left speechless once again. When she looked up, she saw a two-meter tall and dark-skinned man towering over her. This man was the one hailed as Lesser Demon Diablo.

“Beyond the Heavens’ Shield. Elpis.”

Stab, stab, stab, stab—

“Did you just try to kill His Majesty?”

“...”

Stab, stab, stab, stab—

One by one...

“Do you know who I am?!!”

“...”

“I’m Conir!!! Conir heard that you bullied His Majesty!!! Wailing Child!!!!”

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

...they came out and struck Leona.

At the same time, in a place near where the battle against Leona was taking place.

Several people gathered together, emitting a tremendous amount of pressure. Among these people were Sword Emperor Ellie, Overlord Raldo, Dragon King, Saintess Loyna, Elf King Argon and

many more. All of them were waiting with their troops lined up behind them. The troops' total? They numbered over a million.

Marquis Arna stood among the troops of Orodith Empire. He looked at the people around him who were giving off a fierce, vicious momentum as they waited for their turn. However, there was only one thought running through their heads...

'What should I do to make my appearance look better?'

'Gremory's appearance had too great of an impact. I have to make a better appearance than her.'

'I'll make sure to have the best appearance out of everyone here.'

Marquis Arna looked at them. He was obviously a noble recognized by his kingdom. But now...

"Next. Sword Emperor Ellie."

That was right. He was now calling out who was next in line. What Leona thought was 'impossible' had now come true. Minhyuk's allies were literally 'drawing lots' and taking turns jumping into the battlefield.

As for Sword Emperor Ellie? She was now charging toward the battlefield with a subtle smile on her face, *'I'm going to be the one with the best appearance.'*

Minhyuk, who later learned of this fact, had called them, *'Gremory and the Attention Seekers'*.

Chapter 598: Minhyuk's Connections

[The entire world is looking at you in shock.]

[You have earned 3,151 cash.]

[You have earned 4,188 cash.]

[You have earned 4,300 cash.]

Minhyuk heard these notifications every time someone new appeared. The MVP Shop had a system that allowed Minhyuk to gain cash every time someone was in awe of Minhyuk's majesty and dignity as a king.

'I already have 170,000 cash in total.'

It was one hell of a job! Each time a new NPC appeared, cash would flow and line his pockets. And just in time...

[You have completed a Homemade Burger.]

[Unique Grade.]

The dish that Minhyuk made for Richard was completed. However, the grade that came out was quite poor. On top of that, it only had a 'one-level' increase as a buff effect, something that was completely lower than the '3~5 level' increase that he said to Richard earlier.

"..."

Well, Minhyuk was not perfect. There was no way that he could produce excellent dishes all the time.

'It's a relief that the situation right now is... Do I still really need to cook?'

The situation made him think like that. As he watched Leona get beaten to a pulp, he saw Ellie walking from afar.

'... Why is noona walking so fast?'

"Do you know this great one's name?"

But what was more shocking was the fact that Ellie was wearing a blindfold over her eyes. She looked like she came out of a movie as she walked like that.

"...?"

Yes, they hoped that whoever was participating in Leona's hunt would be able to fight without making eye contact with Leona. But now, Ellie did not have any reason to fight with a 'blindfold'.

But the players, commentators and viewers that saw her appear like that were all shocked.

[Crazy...! Is she going to fight with her eyes closed?!]

[Wow. Shit, that's crazy...! The Sword Emperor will fight with her eyes closed...!]

[Isn't she so damn cool?!]

[Ellie-unnie! Please take me!!! Huhu!!!]

"Crazy..."

"Wow..."

Then, Ellie began to run with her eyes covered. And the moment she sped up...

[Everyone is in awe at your friend's performance.]

[You have earned 3,111 cash.]

[You have earned 2,680 cash.]

[You have earned 3,111 cash.]

"...???"

The hundreds of vipers that surrounded Leona's body rushed at Ellie's running figure. However, even with her eyes covered like that, Ellie was still able to gracefully maneuver and evade the snakes' attacks. until she arrived in front of Leona with a graceful landing.

"This great one is..."

Slash, slash, slash, slash—

Stabbbb!

Then, she stabbed her sword in Leona's chest and said, "...the Continental Emperor and the Sword Emperor, Ellie."

As her words ended, hundreds of thousands of soldiers appeared from the hill behind her, waving flags bearing the symbol of Eivelis Empire.

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!”

“Wooooooooooooooooah!!!”

Then, she gave her order, “Annihilate all the enemies.”

Shwaaaaaaaa—

After that, Ellie pulled out her sword from Leona’s chest before turning around gracefully and started attacking the Snake Soldier army. With that, the hundreds of thousands of troops behind her charged forward.

Meanwhile, Ellie thought, ‘*This should have the greatest impact among everyone.*’

[You have earned 4,900 cash.]

[You have earned 4,300 cash.]

[You have earned 4,631 cash.]

Minhyuk did not know why they were trying to attract attention like this. However, he would not really stop them since it was also beneficial to him. After all, Minhyuk was quickly gaining cash with every splendid appearance that they made! On top of that...

[The total amount of accumulated cash has exceeded 200,000.]

[A new slot has been opened!]

[As a reward for obtaining 200,000 cash, you can choose a reward from God-rank artifacts, God-grade ingredients, and even God’s Elixir.]

“...?!”

Minhyuk was very shocked. He was shocked not because he would be able to receive a god-rank reward from the MVP Shop, but because he would be able to choose whatever god-rank reward he wanted due to the 200,000 cash collected.

‘*It should be very difficult...*’

Indeed. After thinking about it, Minhyuk knew that it was difficult. In fact, he had been having a hard time collecting cash just before. He was sure that he would not be able to collect 200,000 cash if Ellie or Valen did not make an appearance.

Minhyuk immediately looked at the newly opened slots in the MVP Shop.

“...”

After checking the MVP Shop, Minhyuk could only laugh blankly at what he saw.

‘*This is crazy...*’

The thing that Minhyuk paid attention to the most was the ‘Unconditionally Create God-Grade from these Ingredients’ slot that appeared in the MVP Shop. When he clicked on the detailed description,

it said that Minhyuk would most definitely receive a God-grade dish if he cooked with the corresponding ingredients in the slot.

‘...*F*cking awesome.*’

Those words seemed to be the most appropriate to describe the amazing rewards listed in the MVP Shop.

Snake Temple was a temple dedicated to God of Snakes Elizabeth, and the place where all of her children were slumbering. In the middle of the temple stood the statue of a beautiful woman with the lower body of a snake.

Right now, there was a man standing in front of this very statue. The man, who was wearing a ragged and worn out robe, looked up at the enchanting statue of the woman. The man pulled his hood down to reveal a beautiful set of golden eyes and shiny silver hair. He looked so beautiful that the word itself was not enough to describe him. This man was none other than Nerva Sephiroth. Nerva Sephiroth was the key figure of Athenae’s second era. And as the heir to the Battle God, one of the Absolute Gods, he was privy to a lot of information about Athenae.

“From what I heard, the world’s strongest had gathered because of your daughter.” Nerva Sephiroth sneered as he caressed the arm of Elizabeth’s statue, “Many would fight back and many would protect.”

This was the perfect opportunity to wreak more havoc. Nerva Sephiroth took out a golden goblet from his robe. He was Nerva Sephiroth, it was a given that he knew how to awaken God of Snakes Elizabeth.

“What a pitiful woman.”

The Six Monsters Gods were kicked out just because they were born as ‘monsters’. But among them, this woman admired and loved Athenae the most.

Then, Nerva Sephiroth poked the tip of his finger with a dagger...

Drip— Drip, drip, drip—

His red blood dripped down on the goblet. Then, he poked the tip of the finger of Elizabeth’s statue. Something surprising happened. Green blood started to drip down from the finger! Nerva Sephiroth held the golden goblet under her finger and collected the green blood dripping down from it.

Drip—

Then...

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A burst of green energy spread out and enveloped the entire temple.

“Go and kill everyone.”

With a *swoosh*—, Nerva Sephiroth disappeared.

Leona had already given up at this point.

“Do you know this great one’s name?”

“What?”

“This great one is Elf King Aragon.”

“Just hurry up and hit me.”

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

“Do you know this great one’s name?”

“Shut up.”

“This great one is the ruler of the seas, the Dragon King.”

“Wow, so great.”

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

“Do you know this great one’s name?”

“Who?”

“This great one is Great Pirate Gorfido.”

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

“I heard that you wanted to kill His Majesty?”

She had grown tired of this line now. Even if Leona vehemently denied it, she knew that no one would believe it.

“That’s right! I tried to kill him! So, what?! What are you going to do? Keok!”

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

“...”

The amount of times those lines had been uttered were the same amount of times that Leona had been beaten. At this point, Leona could not figure out what the identity of that human was. Leona was already at the point where she thought she lost her mind, with every appearance of another strong friend of the human. After getting beaten twenty times just like that, a tremendous amount of pressure began to weigh down on everyone present.

“...!”

“What...?”

Then, a shocking notification rang for everyone present.

[A sealed monster has awakened to the world.]

[Caution!]

[Danger!]

[Caution!]

[Danger!]

[God of Snakes Elizabeth has made her appearance!]

[The one that will be able to hunt God of Snakes Elizabeth will be able to get rewards.]

“...!”

“...!”

The expressions on the faces of both players and NPCs alike turned ugly while happiness bloomed on Leona’s face.

‘Mother!’

Leona’s mother, Elizabeth, was a pitiful woman that had been abandoned by the God of Origin Athenae. Her mother lived quietly and no differently from the snakes and the other ordinary gods. All she wanted to do was to win the heart of Athenae. However, the other gods kicked her out and sealed her in the Stars’ Path, just because she was born a ‘monster’.

‘My poor, unfortunate mother, who is great and strong.’

Swish, swish, swish—

Green air currents swarmed and covered the surrounding air. That was when ‘she’ appeared, a woman that looked exactly like Leona. However, the pressure that she was exerting was on a completely different level from Leona. Leona was able to receive the title of a marquis because the powers that she had was the one that was most similar to Elizabeth’s own power. Of course, the awakened God of Snakes Elizabeth was several times stronger than Leona.

Tingle, tingle—

Even the Named NPCs felt a tingle run down their spines when they felt the pressure weighing down on them. Then, Elizabeth said, “Catch these impudent bastards.”

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

Heaven and earth began to shake, the pressure in the air getting heavier by the second and weighing down on both players and NPCs alike. And then...

[God of Snakes’ Curse.]

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A huge tidal wave made of poison appeared and devoured the players, who were trying to escape.

Swiiiiiiish—

Swiiiiiiiiiish—

[Your HP has reached zero. You will be forced to log-out!]

[Your HP has reached zero. You will be forced to log-out!]

[Your HP has reached zero...]

The scene was horrifying. The players that had been swept away by the poisonous tidal wave turned into dried up, twisted mummies that fell on the ground. Although the players tried to flee in the opposite direction of the tidal wave, it was still faster than them. The poisonous tidal wave devoured around ten meters of land area in just a mere 0.2 seconds.

“Shit, f*ck. Log out!!!”

“That’s freaking strong!!!”

“Rankers, do something!!!”

The fleeing players were appalled. As they continued to scream, a more horrifying scenario started to unfold in front of them.

[The God of Snakes has started to control the system!]

[You will not be able to log-out whenever, wherever you want!]

[You need to be five kilometers away from the God of Snakes before you can log out.]

[The only way for you to log out is to get five kilometers away from the God of Snakes!!!]

“...”

“...”

The players were all left speechless. One of the players, who was running away from the tidal wave, looked back but...

“F*ck...”

Swoosh—

...he turned into a mummy and fell flat on the ground.

Meanwhile, Leona was feeling delighted.

“Uncivilized and foolish ones! Receive your judgment and die in front of my eyes!!!”

She was extremely excited and happy.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

The ground shook once again, sending the players into another wave of shock and fear.

[The God of Snakes’ Wrath has covered the world!]

[The God of Snakes’ Deadly Poison has started to circulate in the air. The range that it covers has reached thirty kilometers!]

[Your HP is falling at a rapid rate!]

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The poisonous green gas overturned the entire world.

“Uuuuuuurrrrk!”

The first player that inhaled the poisonous gas fell down, blood spilling from his mouth. Since it was airborne, it could travel swiftly and freely. Just a weak breeze and the entire surrounding was covered with the poisonous green gas, covering the entire view of the situation.

Minhyuk, who was inside the barrier, saw Ellie accidentally breathe in the poison.

“Urk!”

His strong noona whose mental strength was incredible, easily fell on one knee and vomited a mouthful of blood. Even Sword God Valen and Elpis were brought down to their knees. The elves and the seafolk also brandished their weapons and protected the Dragon King and Elf King Argon from the poison with their bodies. But everything was useless.

“Uweeeeeeeck!”

“Urrrrrrrrrk!”

Their throats started to constrict, their trembling bodies falling down to their knees. Among them...

Thuuud—

Spear God Ben stabbed his spear on the ground in front of Minhyuk’s transparent barrier. Then, Ben looked back at Minhyuk...

Drip, drip, drip, drip—

Blood was already dripping from the corners of Ben’s mouth as he said, “Your Majesty, don’t even think of taking one step forward from where you are.”

“No...”

Minhyuk felt frustrated and helpless. He could tell that he would lose everyone that he cherished and loved in this place. And everything was his fault. Minhyuk’s body began to tremble and shake. If he had not used the Mythical Bird that Cries Sadly For You, then everyone here would not be in danger.

To be honest, it was not really Minhyuk’s fault. No one expected that this would happen. Besides, it was their choice to come here. But Minhyuk still blamed himself. Weak. In the end, humans were weak. Even those that looked strong would eventually show their true nature once they witnessed their loved ones die.

However, there was still one woman that had not made her appearance yet.

Diiiiiiiiing—

The toll of a mysterious bell spread all over the world. Then, a bright light burst out from the tolling bell, expelling the poisonous green gas that covered the entire world.

“I ask in the name of Athenae...”

Diiiiiiiiiiiiing—

With every ring of the bell, a light would burst out. And every time the poisonous green gas met with the light, they would start to dissipate and disappear into nothingness.

“God of Snakes, why are you here?”

Diiiiiiing—

Then, a bright light burst out and engulfed anything and everything in sight. At the same time, people wearing a silver cloak and silver armor bearing the symbol of ‘Athenae Religion’ began to appear one after another. Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, no, millions of them appeared. When all of these people raised their swords to the skies, a notification rang in everyone’s ears.

[Athenae’s Great Child is about going to bring judgment to those that are ‘evil’.]

[Millions of paladins aim their sword toward those that are ‘evil’.]

Flash—

Flaaaaaash—

Flaaaaash—

Bright light burst out from each and every single one of the swords in the hands of the millions of paladins. This light completely engulfed the world. Among them, a woman wearing white priestly robes walked out with ‘God Athenae’s Bell’ on her hand.

Elizabeth looked a bit perplexed and confused at first. But not long after, her lips twisted into a gruesome smirk, “Filthy followers of Athenae, she was the one that abandoned me.”

Her voice sounded gloomy and wicked. And the woman wearing the white priestly robe?

Shiiiiing—

She walked with the bell in one hand and a sword in the other while saying, “Fury. Despair. Sadness... and lust. You are someone stained with those things.”

[Athenae’s Saintess Loyna aims her sword at God of Snakes Elizabeth!]

[She is following Athenae’s commands and is wielding her sword to punish the foolish ‘evil’.]

[Saintess’ Authority has been triggered.]

The swords in the hands of the paladins glowed brighter. Then, a sword made of light flew out of their blades and soared to the skies. Millions of swords made of light floated in the skies, like stars on a dark night.

“Disappear.”

Fwoooooooom—

Stab—

Loyna’s sword was the first to move. It flew swiftly and pierced through Elizabeth’s heart. Right after that, the millions of swords in the skies began to rain down on Elizabeth. The falling swords looked quite similar to a ‘meteor rain’. And this meteor rain of swords were falling down to judge the God of Snakes.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

Chapter 599: First Teacher, First Friend

The mission of the great Athenae Religion’s Saintess was to bring judgement to those that had been stained with evil. The typical examples of this were the demons and the undead. The saintess was

also given the mission to stop the ‘Six God Monsters’, existences that even the Absolute Gods feared. Each and every single one of them had their own personalities, attributes, and abilities, and they were extremely strong.

Millions of sword lights fell down like a meteor and pierced through Elizabeth’s body in one go. The swords, which received the saintess’ blessings, exerted stronger power than before. After all, the paladins’ powers would only show its true colors when exorcising ‘evil’.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

A scream burst out of Elizabeth’s mouth at the first sword light that pierced through her body.

“...Mother?”

Leona could not hide how flustered she was. Was her great mother going to be sent to eternal rest just two minutes after her appearance?

“...”

The commentators and viewers alike were mesmerized by the beautiful woman that appeared. The same was true for Richard and the members of the Maserrati Guild.

‘Crazy...’

‘He’s even friends with the Saintess?’

‘At this rate, are you telling me that he’s also close with Athenae’s President Kang Taehoon?’

However, unknown to everyone, Saintess Loyna was currently under a great deal of pressure.

‘Among the Six Monster Gods, their youngest, Elizabeth, is known to have the strongest six monster power.’

Of course, that ability had been weakened. However, that was the problem. Elizabeth’s abilities were so ridiculous that it was still overwhelming, even after it had been weakened.

Loyna hurriedly prayed to God Athenae, ‘Saintess’ Prayers.’

A bright light burst out from Loyna’s hands, healing those that had been hit by Elizabeth’s attack and were suffering from severe internal injuries.

[Elizabeth’s Poison has left your body.]

[Your internal injuries are healing rapidly.]

The ones that were brought to the brink of death had regained their rosy complexions as their internal injuries were healed completely.

“So, this is the power of a true saintess...”

Even Sword Emperor Ellie was in awe of Loyna’s power. After all, who would believe that a single woman possessed the power to heal everyone here? But unbeknownst to everyone, sweat was already dripping down Loyna’s forehead.

'It's worth a try if we're with Saintess Loyna.'

'If we have Saintess Loyna's buff then...'

'We have the chance to wipe out one of the Six Monster Gods from the world.'

The Named NPCs that gathered at Minhyuk's call thought the same thing. All of them thought that Loyna healed them so that they could fight. However, it was the complete opposite.

"All of the troops have to return! Run as far and as fast as you can!"

"...Why?"

"She's beyond what we can handle. Hurry, before she comes back to her senses!"

Everyone could not understand Loyna's words for a moment. The number of troops gathered here almost reached five million. On top of that, the saintess was with them. They could not understand why she was telling them that their enemy was beyond their ability to deal with.

"Hurry, there's not much time..."

"You're weaker than what I thought."

"...!"

Then, Elizabeth's gloomy and creepy voice rang in Loyna's ears. Elizabeth was smiling wickedly despite the sword blades piercing through her body.

Swiiiiish—

The swords made of light slowly slipped out of her body as her injuries regenerated at a rapid rate. Then, Elizabeth spread her arms and...

"Damn it!" Loyna shouted, her face turning white.

[Elizabeth has borrowed the power of Wolf King Loraudi.]

[Wolf's Fang has been activated.]

Wolf King Loraudi was known for having the strongest physical ability among the Six Monster Gods. Immediately after that...

Slaaaaaaash—

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud!

"Kyaaaaaaaaaack!"

...a gigantic wolf appeared and bit Loyna's leg, staining her white priestly robes with blood. Then, the same set of fangs appeared on the bodies of everyone present.

"Keooooook!"

Some collapsed and died instantly, bleeding from the bite that appeared on their necks.

"Keuaaaaaaaaack!"

Some sank to their knees, their weapons falling on the ground as bite marks appeared on their arms. “Urghhhh!” Ellie groaned as she dropped her sword, suffering a bite mark on her wrists. The ability was unbelievable. It inflicted massive damage on everyone present without even attacking them directly. Everyone received damage except for one. Minhyuk, who was inside the Let’s Have a Meal barrier, was safe and sound.

“...”

Minhyuk was left speechless at the sight that unfolded in front of him.

‘Black Dragon Vormon... Demigod Asura, and even Great Demon Verus are no match for this...’

Back then, 50% of Great Demon Verus’ power had been sealed. However, Minhyuk thought that he would still be no match against Elizabeth even if he had his full power.

‘Everyone... will die...’

Just when the thought flashed in Minhyuk’s head, he saw Sword Emperor Ellie hold her sword with her left hand. Elf King Argon, who was limping on one leg, picked up his bow and aimed an arrow at Elizabeth. Yes. For Minhyuk, ‘giving up’ meant logging out. But for them, it was different. And it was also because of that reason...

[Would you like to purchase Ingredient that can Unconditionally Make God-Grade Dishes?]

“Yes.”

[You have used 200,000 cash to purchase Ingredient that can Unconditionally Make God-Grade Dishes.]

Minhyuk immediately checked the detailed description of the ingredient.

[The Ingredient that can Unconditionally Make God-Grade Dishes has a 100% chance of making a God-grade dish. However, even in the same grade, there are dishes that are excellent and dishes that have lesser effects than others.

You have a chance of making Absolute God-Grade Dish or ordinary God-Grade Dishes.

Minhyuk tried to cook. But that also became a problem. Elizabeth’s gaze turned to Minhyuk. It seemed like she noticed the powerful force emanating from deep within him.

‘The power of a god?’

Elizabeth could tell that the man had the power of a god and that he was trying to do something. It was clear that it was not an ordinary power of a god. Also, the man annoyed Elizabeth. Why was the man unaffected by the ability that she expressed earlier?

Actually, it was working. The moment Elizabeth pointed her hand toward Minhyuk...

[Let’s Have a Meal’s barrier has started to sustain damage!]

[Warning!!! Nothing is 'Absolute' in front of Elizabeth's overwhelming power!]

"...!"

Minhyuk made eye contact with Elizabeth. At that moment, everyone knew...

"All troops, retreat as far back as possible!"

"Retreat at full speed!!!"

"Don't look back, just run!!!"

The kings of other races, the empress of Eivelis Empire, and even Great Demon Gremory immediately ordered their army's retreat. As the troops immediately stepped back, their eyes remained on Elizabeth who was taking a step forward in the air. The leaders of the various groups all chose to remain and not retreat.

Why? Because Minhyuk was in danger.

"Shit...! All of you should run and escape!!!" Minhyuk shouted but it was useless. Spear God Ben and Sword Emperor Ellie had already leapt to the skies.

"Sky Ripper..."

"...Frenzy."

Just when the two cast their skills to attack Elizabeth...

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Gigantic anacondas appeared on Elizabeth's body, shooting straight toward Ellie and Ben and restricting their movements. Not long after...

Shwaaaaa—

Shwaaaaa—

Hundreds of anacondas appeared and wrapped around all of the people that surrounded and protected Minhyuk, restricting their movements and stopping them from moving.

"Ughhhh...!"

"Your Majesty!!!"

"Minhyuk!!!"

"..."

Minhyuk bit his lips as he watched the barrier slowly melt away.

'Right now, who are you worrying about?'

Minhyuk was a foreigner that would be able to come back to life, yet the people around him threw themselves forward to try and save him. In just a blink, the Let's Have a Meal Barrier started to melt away.

Loyna broke free from the anacondas' hold with Athenae's power. She was the only one that could use 'Athenae's Barrier'. If she could cast the barrier, Elizabeth would not be able to pierce through Minhyuk. However...

"Hmmmph, hmmmph!"

Elizabeth flicked her fingers and Loyna's mouth turned shut, it was as if they had been sewed tight.

"Is he the person that you care about and treasure the most?"

Elizabeth found it interesting that a single person was able to gather all these high-profile NPCs. On top of that, he was a human. Everyone turned desperate. And in that desperation, Elizabeth hoped that they would feel frustration and helplessness. After all, everyone would feel despair and frustration upon Minhyuk's death. Then, Elizabeth arrived in front of the disappearing barrier.

Shwaaaaa—

Shwaaaaa—

However, Minhyuk was secretly preparing an attack and waiting for her to approach. The attack was none other than the 'Overlord Technique'. Minhyuk had already judged that Elizabeth was an overwhelming opponent the moment she appeared, so he decided to use Overlord's Technique right away. Even though he did not fight, his Overlord's Mana had been constantly increasing.

"Overlord's..."

Just when the strong power started to surge from within Minhyuk's body, Elizabeth waved her hand and...

[Your casting of Overlord's Technique has been stopped.]

"...?!"

What kind of overpowered existence was she? In the end, Elizabeth appeared right in front of Minhyuk, her yellow eyes glinting sharply as she said, "I'll make you suffer tremendously and make your death as painful as possible."

While everyone was looking at Elizabeth's cruelty and viciousness in abject terror, an unidentified voice rang, "God's Sacrifice."

"...?!!!"

God's Sacrifice. Perhaps Elizabeth was the only one that knew about it. There were only a few of the Continental Gods that had this power. It was a power that granted the Continental Gods a force close to an Absolute God's power, in exchange for all of the divine power in their body. The price for using this power was death.

Flaaaaaaaaaash—

A bright golden light burst out as a man appeared in front of Elizabeth.

"..."

The man was someone that Minhyuk knew very well.

This was a story that happened a long time ago, back when Minhyuk had just started playing Athenae and had connected Instructor Valen with Instructor Roina.

Instructor Valen had been living a lonely life, a life without interaction, having left behind his glorious days as the Sword God. However, a young man suddenly appeared in front of him, came to his house, and served him a delicious and warm meal.

'Hehe, Instructor!'

Valen treated the young man with a bright smile kindly. He spent most of his time with the young man. When the young man received his god class, 'Food God', Valen was near the dungeon.

'Good going.'

When the young man first met the members of Legend Guild...

'It's good that you made good friends.'

When the young man became king...

'You look cool.'

When the young man was in danger...

'You can get over it.'

Valen watched over the young man all the time. It was to the point that his wife said, *'Why don't you just go and meet him instead?'*

But Valen just smiled and shook his head while saying, *'This much is enough.'*

He had always remained invisible as he supported and cheered the young man from afar. So, the question was... Who was Minhyuk to him? At one point, Valen started to keep a diary. Perhaps the diary was some sort of will? It was made just in case the boy was placed in danger some day.

As he wrote his diary, he prayed and begged Athenae, *'God of Origin, I beg you. Please give me the strength to save that child if he ever comes across danger.'*

God of Origin Athenae heard the prayers that he made every time and she was both pleased and sad at the same time. Here, she was witnessing the friendship of the guardians and the foreigners. One day, Athenae decided to listen to Valen's prayers and grant him his wish.

On the day that Athenae gave Valen his wish, Valen wrote the last chapter in his diary.

A bright golden light burst out as a man approached Elizabeth and Minhyuk. Elizabeth vehemently denied the man's power, *'There's no way that Athenae will listen to that man's prayers!!!'*

God's Sacrifice was a power that not anyone could invoke. It was a deadly skill that could only be triggered if one gained Athenae's approval and recognition. But not long after, something surprising happened.

[God of Origin Athenae grants a final power to the one that wants to protect.]

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The moment Valen swung his sword, hundreds of blades slashed Elizabeth's body.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

Valen immediately approached Elizabeth and brought his sword down.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaam—

“In... Instructor...”

Valen's figure was slowly fading. However, he just smiled slightly at Minhyuk. He did not want to say anything to Minhyuk because he knew that the boy would be sad if he did so. But there was one thing that he wanted to tell the boy.

‘Don't ever stop. Keep on moving forward.’

As time went by, Valen's figure grew more and more transparent. At the same time, the power that Valen did not wish for but Athenae granted to him was suddenly triggered and made its appearance.

[Athenae has handed Valen's Diary to you.]

The diary hidden in Valen's body flew out and flipped its pages on its own. The letters appeared in front of Minhyuk. He was the only one that saw the letters and the words that they formed.

[Everything is still vivid to me. The day he first visited my cabin and the warmth that he left afterwards.]

[He became the Food God. I'll continue to cheer him on and watch him from afar.]

[Ah, he met new friends. Were they the Legend Guild? I'm glad that he has met good friends.]

[He became a king. He...]

[He did...]

[He...]

[He's...]

[He was the first person to cook for me.]

[He was the only child that smiled sincerely at me, who has been alone all my life.]

[He was the only one that made me laugh after a long time.]

Then, he read the last words written in the diary.

[He's my first and last friend.]

[He's my first and last disciple.]

After that sentence, there were traces of words that had been erased. Minhyuk desperately tried to read the words but there was a limit to how much he could read from the erased characters.

[B t l t m s th s to s t fy m ow g. Y a my f st s.]

At that moment, Athenae's powers were triggered and made the erased and blurred characters turn clear. At the same time, Valen soared to the skies. As he rose to the skies, to deal with Elizabeth,

Valen's gaze remained on only one person and one person alone, Minhyuk. That was when the erased letters were restored, appearing in front of Minhyuk clearly.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Then, an explosion of light devoured Valen and Elizabeth. Minhyuk called for Valen desperately, "Instructoooooooooor!!!"

Amidst the tumultuous skies and the shaking earth, the letters finally turned completely clear and arranged themselves to complete the last chapter of Valen's diary.

[I know that I shouldn't say these words. Still, it wouldn't hurt since everything will remain in my imagination, right?]

[I'm being too greedy, I know. Yet I can't stop imagining how it feels like to watch him grow up. Watch him go to a Swordsmanship Academy. Watch him become a soldier. Watch him turn into a knight.]

[This is just me being greedy. That's why I'm going to erase this last chapter of my diary.]

[But let me just say this to satisfy my own greed. You...]

Minhyuk's eyes followed the words and read the last sentence of the diary.

[...are my first son.]

Chapter 600: First Teacher, First Friend

Everyone turned silent. Even the commentators that had been yapping about how it was a disaster and that they could not do it turned mute.

All the troops that were rushing to escape, the Named NPCs that had gathered for Minhyuk's sake and even Minhyuk were all staring at the place where the light exploded and devoured Elizabeth and Valen.

Minhyuk turned to look back at the last sentence on Valen's final diary entry, '*Instructor...*'

Instructor Valen was both a teacher and a friend. He was the very first person that Minhyuk met and interacted with in Athenae. Minhyuk, who had suffered from eating addiction, was facing depression and social phobia, refusing to meet people and having no friends. In fact, he had already started to lose his will to live. During the darkest time of his life, Valen appeared. Valen was like the oasis that Minhyuk found in the middle of the desert. A man that cared for and treasured Minhyuk as if he was his own son.

Vwooooooooooong—

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Then, a figure slowly fell from the skies. Minhyuk immediately dashed forward to catch the figure. The figure was none other than Valen. He looked completely miserable, his entire body burned to a crisp.

"Ugh..."

"...!"

Minhyuk felt immense relief. Valen was not yet dead! He was still breathing and living! However, his breath was so weak that Minhyuk felt that the man would die soon. At the same time...

“That was dangerous,” a bone-chilling voice rang out.

Everyone present raised their heads and turned toward the direction of the sound. There, they saw Elizabeth, who had already regenerated half of her body that had been blown away.

“He should know. He should know that something like this could not kill me,” Elizabeth said, completely happy at the turn of events, “I temporarily stopped the draining process of his divine power so he would not die.”

Would Elizabeth do something like that for someone else? Ordinarily, the answer would of course be a resounding no. She smiled creepily and said, “This way, you will be able to see everything that you tried to protect fall apart and die, you know? Kyahahahahahahahahahaha!!!”

Minhyuk gritted his teeth. She had only kept Valen alive so she could see him fall into despair until his death. Minhyuk could tell that if Valen continued to remain in this state, he would truly die.

At that moment, Richard hugged Minhyuk, who was holding on to Valen, tightly.

“Athenae’s Barrier!” Loyna shouted as her power surged out and created a huge barrier that enveloped them.

“Minhyuk, don’t forget what you have to do right now!” Richard shouted but the words did not register in Minhyuk’s ears.

If somebody else was in his position, it would also be difficult for them to find any semblance of reason. Minhyuk’s job was obviously to cook for Richard so that his Absolute Monarch’s Stigma could show its full potential.

‘Maybe I can make something to save Instructor Valen.’

But Minhyuk’s head was currently only filled with thoughts of Valen. Yes, Minhyuk believed that he should cook for Valen.

At that moment, Valen, whose breathing was growing weaker by the second, touched Minhyuk’s hand. Tears immediately gushed out of Minhyuk’s eyes when he saw Valen smiling weakly and shaking his head. Minhyuk hugged Valen tightly as the man called out his name, “Minhyuk...”

“Yes, Instructor?”

“Don’t lose your majesty as the king.”

“...”

Minhyuk actually did not care for that title right now. He would rather give up that title and choose to save Valen right here and now. But Valen squeezed the last of his strength and stroked Minhyuk’s head while saying, “I’ll give you a present.”

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

At the same time, Valen’s soul left his body and flew rapidly to someplace else.

Elizabeth realized that her enemies' were far more formidable than she initially thought. But playtime was over. Elizabeth breathed deeply as her form started to change.

[Elizabeth is transforming into her original body!]

[Elizabeth, who has transformed into her original body, will be 1.4x stronger than normal!]

The process of Elizabeth's transformation into her original body was gruesome. Her tongue split apart as she hissed while her bottom half turned completely into that of a snake.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaack!"

[Elizabeth has started to take control of the system!]

[All of your skills will not be available for five minutes!]

"...!"

"...!"

The close combat fighters immediately took advantage of the gap that the transformation had given them. Overlord Raldo, Sword Emperor Ellie, Spear God Ben and Beyond the Heavens' Shield Elpis all leapt to the skies and surrounded Elizabeth. They certainly looked awe-inspiring.

Shwaaaaaaaa—

But then, hundreds of gigantic snakes stretched out and attacked them. Spear God Ben pierced through several snakes at once.

Slaaaaaaaaaash—

A snake, which tried to take advantage of Spear God Ben's inattentiveness, was split in two with Sword Emperor Ellie's skillful display of swordsmanship.

"Weak humans," Elizabeth sneered at them as the gigantic snakes writhed more fiercely and attacked them more violently.

Elli stepped on one of the snakes and leapt toward Elizabeth, her sword stabbing the middle of Elizabeth's forehead with precise movements.

Staaaaaab—

"Ugh!"

"...!"

"...!"

[The world's best NPCs have started a pincer attack and closed in on Elizabeth.]

[Did you see that? Their combined force is completely out of this world. Look at their movements? Their control is superb even in a situation where all of their skills have been disabled.]

After stabbing Elizabeth's forehead, Ellie once again leapt to the skies. Elizabeth's gaze immediately followed the figure of the daring human that stabbed her forehead. However, Spear God Ben did not give her any room to breathe. He immediately stabbed her chest with his spear.

Stab—

Stab, stab, stab, stab—

“Kyaaaaaaaaaack!”

As Elizabeth tried to grab the spear stuck in her chest, Raldo moved forward and stabbed her flanks dozens of times in a row.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

“Kiyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

Elpis' sword struck Elizabeth's head consecutively.

Slaaaaaaaaaash—

A sword stuck through half of her head, the Spear God's spear was stuck in her chest, the Overlord stabbing her sides, and even Elpis was about to split her head in half with his sword. The sight was grotesque. But despite the gruesome attacks that landed on her body...

“Kyahahahahahahahaha!”

Elizabeth was still laughing. Immediately after that...

“...Don't tell me!” Raldo shouted, his senses screaming that there was danger.

Elizabeth's head momentarily turned huge as she bit Raldo's left shoulder.

Cruuuuuuuuunch—

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

It was so easy. It was as if Elizabeth bit on something soft and easy to bite.

Drip— drip, drip—

Raldo's left arm fell down, blood dripping on the ground. Raldo, the one hailed as the Overlord, slowly fell to the ground. But something far more shocking happened.

[Elizabeth's innate ability has been triggered.]

“So, this is your power?” Elizabeth mumbled, a smile lingering on her face. Then, she spat out, “Overlord.”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Blazing flames burst out of her body and swept the area around her. That was right. Each of the Six Monster Gods had their own special characteristics. Elizabeth was granted the power to control the system, but that was not the ability that represented her.

As long as she took a bite of her opponent, she would be able to use her opponent's ability once. On top of that, the power would be at MAX level. Yes, it was an overpowered ability.

They were collapsing. The greatest existences of Athenae were collapsing in front of Elizabeth one after the other.

Thud—

Thud—

Thud—

“Your Majesty...” Elpis, Beyond the Heavens’ Shield, cried out as he reached his hands toward Minhyuk. Elpis grinned softly at his king.

Splurt—

Elizabeth’s hand pierced through Elpis’ heart while he was on the ground. Taking advantage of this, Ellie, whose entire body had been charred by the flames earlier, raised her sword and stabbed Elizabeth in the neck.

Slaaaaaaaaash—

However, only a small portion of her sword pierced through Elizabeth’s neck. Elizabeth turned to look back at Ellie, her mouth forming a vicious and crazed grin, “Die.”

Splurt—

Elizabeth’s hand pierced through Ellie’s heart.

Thud—

The Absolute Supreme NPC was slowly turning into a cold corpse.

“Elpis... Noona...”

Not yet satisfied, Elizabeth ran after the Dragon King, Elf King Argon, the beastfolk Jevis and Kiari and everyone else. In the end, everyone died.

“...”

Minhyuk stopped trying to cook. All of the people that he treasured and loved were collapsing. He did not have the time to process anything.

Joy Co. Ltd.’s meeting room.

[Sword Emperor Ellie has died.]

[Beyond the Heavens’ Elpis has died.]

[Sword Saint Conir has died.]

[Great Demon Gremory has died.]

President Kang Taehoon was shaking all over. All of the people present could not even breathe at the horrendous sight that was being broadcasted on their screens.

Elizabeth's awakening was not supposed to happen at this point in time. None of them could handle her. Even if it was the Absolute Supreme NPC or Demigod Ben. After all, Elizabeth was an existence that had power at the 'Absolute God Level'. Her level? It was around Level 1,200.

But Nerva Sephiroth had awakened her.

Kang Taehoon jumped from his seat. His steps were unstable but he still ran somewhere. Team Leader Park Minggyu chased after him, "President!!! President!!!"

Although Team Leader Park got a hold of him, Kang Taehoon ignored him and shook off his hands.

'The steadfast and firm president...'

Indeed, Kang Taehoon was no longer calm, he was falling apart. Not long after, Kang Taehoon arrived at the place where Supercomputer Athenae was located. He was gasping for breath as he shouted anxiously, "Athenae, stop Elizabeth right this moment!!!"

"President."

President Kang Taehoon had told his employees time and again that they should not intervene in the Athenae worldview. He had always told them that it was a world that the NPCs had to lead and that their intervention would cause a collapse. But now, the very same President Kang Taehoon was shouting at Athenae to stop Elizabeth.

[I cannot do that.]

"Athenae, do not make me say it twice! Do it right now...!"

[As of this moment...]

Athenae's voice stopped Kang Taehoon from his tracks.

[...the stars that have lost their light have awakened.]

"What?"

Both Kang Taehoon and Park Minggyu could not understand what Athenae meant. But it seemed like Park Minggyu thought of something as he rushed back to the meeting room.

"...No way," Team Leader Park Minggyu gasped as he tried to catch his breath. He was aware that Valen's soul left to go somewhere else. And the place that he headed to was revealed the moment Park Minggyu entered the meeting room once again.

Every single person inside the meeting room jumped to their feet and looked at the screen with bated breath. At that moment, a world message appeared on the screen and was displayed to the entire world.

[The Gods of the Abyss have awakened and opened their eyes to the world once again.]

Hell on earth unfolded in front of Minhyuk. The body of the powerful Sword Emperor Ellie, with her heart pierced through, was slowly turning cold. Elpis, ever so reliable, smiled gently at Minhyuk even until his death. Conir, the boy that liked to cook ramyeon, died with his neck snapped into two. The Dragon King and Elf King Argon, who ran for his sake, fell down and died on their knees.

Spear God Ben, who returned for him, had died in front of the barrier that protected him with his spear stabbed on the ground and his heart burst into pieces. Almost everyone that came here for his sake had died. Even those that tried to escape were killed under the hands of Elizabeth, a mountain of corpses appearing in front of Minhyuk's eyes.

Richard had lost all sense of reason after witnessing the pandemonium in front of him, "Uuuuurk!"

On the other hand, Minhyuk gnashed his teeth and glared at Elizabeth.

Grit, grit, grit—

Minhyuk himself had almost lost all sense of reason, but...

'You guys don't want me to give up until the very end, right?' Minhyuk asked everyone.

I am a king. I am the Food God. I am your friend.

He would fight until the very end.

Swoooooosh—

Athenae's Barrier slowly disappeared upon Loyna's death. Minhyuk prepared for his final battle as the barrier slowly melted and disappeared.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

In the battlefield covered with corpses, a soul appeared right in front of Minhyuk, carrying a sword to the best of its abilities. The soul looked at Minhyuk gently and stroked his head with a grin on its face.

"You're amazing."

"..."

Minhyuk just looked at Valen. And Valen? He looked up at the sky and said, "Minhyuk."

Minhyuk had always called Valen 'Instructor'. But this time, he called him differently, "Yes, Master."

"Become a true god today."

Then, Valen entered Minhyuk's body.

[You have inherited the power of the Sword God!]

[All of your swordsmanship skills have transcended the human realm and reached the level of the gods!]

[You will only be able to use the Sword God's power temporarily!]

Then, Minhyuk followed Valen's gaze and also looked up at the skies. There, he saw twelve floating stars. The twelve stars fell down like meteors and circled around Minhyuk. There was a very familiar man among the stars.

"Food God?"

[The Twelve Gods look at you and the Sword God.]

[You have inherited the powers of the owners of the Abyss!]

Immediately after the notifications rang, the twelve stars entered Minhyuk's body. At the same time, Minhyuk's hair turned golden while his eyes turned a beautiful shade of silver. Then, thirteen swords appeared right in front of Minhyuk. Written on the blades of each sword were the names of the gods that owned them.

[God of Life, Arjya.]

[God of Magic, Archipelo.]

[God of Animals, Ideo.]

[God of Alchemy, Karma.]

[God of Shield, Aurod.]

[God of Time, Card.]

[...Creation...]

[...Blacksmiths...]

And finally...

[Sword God, Valen.]

Minhyuk held one of the swords in his hand. The owner of the sword? God of Life. Arjya. Under Elizabeth's shocked gaze, Minhyuk's voice rang and resonated with the sacred voices of the thirteen gods. The words got transmitted to everyone, including the viewers and commentators that were watching the broadcast.

[The One that Connects the Power of the Gods has wielded the Sword of Life.]

Fwoooooooooooooooooosh—

Then, Minhyuk swung the 'first sword'.

[The tree that was once dead, has found life, growing leaves and bearing fruits again.]