

Gourmet 61

Chapter 61: Beef is Always the Best

Jan suddenly felt like the empress was similar to Minhyuk. What was surprising was the fact that the vassals around her seemed to be used to it, like it was something that they had already experienced countless times.

"Let's go back," Ellie said, turning to leave. Since the person she was interested in had disappeared, she lost all interest in attending the tournament's awarding ceremony. With that, she quickly left.

'He went to eat something delicious...?' Ellie thought, chuckling at the words. She did not know about the others, but for some reason, she understood the man's thoughts perfectly. Ellie was someone who had money, excellent swordsmanship, the Eivelis Empire, and everything else in this world. However, even with all of that, she still felt like she was missing something in her life.

What she missed was 'delicious food', something that was once Ellie's pleasure, her safe haven. Others might think that the man was being disrespectful, but Ellie felt that she could relate to what the man was thinking. She was once similar, stopping at nothing in order to eat something delicious when she was young. Suddenly, she stopped in her tracks. She thought, 'Were those really his pure and genuine thoughts...?'

Ellie believed that no one could be so pure these days. She stopped walking and turned to look back to the spot where he should have been. She thought, 'Len. Why did you give him Ellie's Kitchen Knife?'

Ellie had a feeling that she would meet with the man that Len had acknowledged and recognized, sooner or later.

Prasell, the Emperor's City.

Levitt was running a cold noodles store in this place, just like he did in real life. The reason why he opened one here was...

'Delicious cold noodles!'

Cold noodles were the perfect food to help one get rid of the heat; it was also a very nice delicacy, even in winter. Adding some vinegar and mustard to the cold soup, before mixing and taking a sip of it, would definitely give one the most authentic flavor of cold noodles!

There was also the spicy cold noodles that would always be topped with finely chopped bright-red seasonings, strips of cucumbers, pears, meat, and a half of a boiled egg. Pouring out a bit of the cold noodle soup into this dish and mixing it together with the egg yolk would bring out its perfect red color, and taste.

What would happen if one ate both of these delicacies with marinated pork or beef ribs? Everyone that had eaten this combination would recall the joy at the spicy and sweet flavors, as well as the chewy texture of the cold noodles, and would smile again at the taste of the sweet, warm and tender marinated ribs.

Alas, this shop only had flies for customers.

"What?! Where did he go?" Levitt asked aloud. He was sitting on one of the chairs in his empty cold noodles store, watching the tournament. The champion of the tournament that displayed overwhelming skills, outstanding physical abilities, and a great appetite, had suddenly disappeared. The reason why Levitt had been watching the tournament with high expectations was to figure out the man's identity. Anyone would be interested in the person that surpassed Lucia in this tournament.

'Ha... Let's just continue to watch the competition. Tsk,' He thought. Just then...

Clang, clang!

The bell on his store's door rang loudly as a customer came inside. Levitt stood up only to stare dumbly at his visitor. He thought, 'Huh?' which was followed by an outburst,

"Huuuuuuuuuuuuuh?!"

"Hello! I want to order some cold noodles for takeaway!"

"...By any chance, are you the champion of the tournament?"

The customer who came in was none other than Minhyuk. He was currently licking his lips in anticipation and excitement. He said, "Can you pack 100 bowls of cold noodles and 100 bowls of spicy cold noodles?"

"...Yes?"

Levitt was extremely surprised to hear his order.

'That's a total of 200 bowls! What is he going to do with that much?!

So, he asked, "A...are you going to hand it over to other people to celebrate your victory in the tournament?"

"Nope. I'll eat them all!" Minhyuk answered, smiling brightly. Then he added, "I heard that the cold noodles sold here are very refreshing and delicious. I also heard that the owner is a handsome man!"

"Haha! Is that so? Of course, of course it can be packed!" Levitt guffawed joyously as he answered.

It was a bit shocking to see the champion of the tournament enter his shop, but Levitt felt extremely satisfied to know that he was here to buy cold noodles from his store. Besides, no one would dislike a person that has high expectations for the taste of his dishes. Levitt walked towards his kitchen as he introduced his specialty to his customer. He said, "We use Hamhung noodles for our store's cold noodles. We also have a machine in the store that helps us with pulling the noodles."

"Ooh, so you don't buy it?!"

"Of course not. Buying it and serving it to the customers is a form of disrespect towards the customers. Besides, the noodles will be chewier if you make them yourself."

"Uncle."

“Yes?” Levitt asked, tilting his head at the man that called out to him.

“I’m really, really excited!”

Excited. Hearing this word was enough to put a big smile on Levitt’s face. It seemed like the young man was someone that could make anyone feel good. Besides, being excited meant that his heart was thumping wildly in anticipation for the food. For Levitt, having someone wait for his food excitedly made him feel like he could achieve the peak of deliciousness in making his cold noodles. He was determined not to disappoint such an excited customer. Because of that, Levitt gave his all as he started to make cold noodles.

“How much cucumber and pear should I put in for you?”

“Just the normal amount for the cucumber, and as much as you can for the pear!”

The sweet, crunchy pear was a must for the cold, refreshing cold noodles.

“I see, you sure know how to eat it, huh?” Levitt said, forgetting that the man in front of him was the tournament’s champion. All he knew was that he wanted to cook delicious cold noodles for this person.

“Ah. Every time I finish cooking a bowl, you should put it in your inventory.”

“Yes, yes!”

Levitt wondered if he could really finish 200 bowls of cold noodles. Even so, he continued to pack the cold noodles and hand them over to Minhyuk, so that the latter could place them in his inventory. Just like that, Levitt finished cooking 220 bowls of cold noodles for Minhyuk.

“There’s 20 extra bowls?”

“Think of it as an added freebie!”

“Thank you very much, your business will definitely thrive and prosper!”

Levitt chuckled at him. After he finished the calculations, he suddenly became curious. He could not help himself and asked, “Are you really just going to eat these cold noodles?”

“Nope!” Minhyuk answered and smiled, his face filled with anticipation and excitement. He continued to say, “I’m going to eat it with seasoned beef ribs!”

“Kyaa!” Levitt exclaimed in surprise. Cold noodles and beef ribs were truly the ultimate pair.

However, Minhyuk’s expression suddenly turned dark. He said, “But, I don’t think I will be able to eat marinated beef ribs.”

“W...why?” Levitt asked, suddenly feeling sympathetic when he saw Minhyuk’s expression of sorrow.

“Because, to do that, I need to season it and marinate it for quite a long time.”

Well-seasoned marinated beef ribs could not be eaten right away just because one seasoned it well. Of course, the regular beef ribs were also delicious, but cold noodles should be partnered with well-seasoned, deeply marinated beef ribs. Minhyuk thought that he could eat the well-seasoned marinated beef ribs after a week, but in the meantime, he could just satisfy his craving by eating the regular beef ribs first.

Levitt pondered deeply. He wanted to help this sad customer in front of him. At that moment, he thought of something. He said, "If you go to the local Pork Ribs Restaurant, Calo will be able to marinate it for you right away!"

"Eh?" Minhyuk asked, tilting his head in confusion.

"Calo has the job class of Marinating Chef. As far as I have heard, he has the skill to marinate and ripen anything right away! Something that would take you a few weeks to will be done quickly!"

"Oh. Such a great power exists in this world?!" Minhyuk asked excitedly. By looking at his expression, one would think he found a 'legendary item'.

Levitt smiled and nodded. He said, "Yes, but you should first meet with Calo."

"Yes!" Minhyuk answered and bowed politely at him before leaving his store.

Levitt stood up and smacked his lips. He said, "Wow... Marinated beef ribs and cold noodles sound really delicious!"

His mouth watered at the thought. Then, he suddenly caught himself halfway through his train of thought. He wondered aloud to himself in his now-empty store again, "So, why did he leave the competition so suddenly?"

It seemed like he still had not solved this mystery.

Minhyuk was running excitedly. Thanks to Levitt's advice, he met with the man named Calo, and was able to marinate and mature his meat perfectly in just a matter of minutes. He even wanted to learn the skill, but it was an impossible feat. Calo was able to have that skill set only because he had the hidden class, 'Marinating Master'. As soon as he started the game, he started to marinate and mature different dishes every day, just so he could get the hidden class. Minhyuk was also able to buy some charcoal from him. The charcoal that he gave him was said to be a magical charcoal that could create a fire that would not die down for 12 hours.

"Hello!"

Fwooooooom!

"Did something just pass by?"

"I think so."

The guards that were guarding the gates of Prasell, were quite astonished at Minhyuk's running speed. The reason for Minhyuk's speed was because he was using both Haste and Bardy

Swordsmanship. Not long after, Minhyuk was able to reach a quiet area, in the sense that the place was void of any humans.

The moment Minhyuk defeated the minotaurus and acquired the ingredients, he was able to acquire all of the parts, including its bones. That was the reason why everyone thought that Minhyuk had placed the whole minotaurus in his inventory. In addition, the food that he would get from the ingredients that he acquired from the minotaurus was said to be much more delicious compared to regular ingredients. Of course, this was according to the Eccentric Food God skill.

Minhyuk's mouth twitched with joy. The first thing that he did was to make a fire with the charcoal and put it under the square grilling pan. Next, he pulled out different ingredients like lettuce, perilla leaves, garlic, and spicy dipping sauce. These ingredients were almost the same as when he had grilled pork belly last time. There were also some radish wraps, sliced onions, and other sauces. He also did not forget to pull out his cold noodles and spicy cold noodles.

Minhyuk began to cook after he placed the cutting board in front of him, and brought out the rump steak, the meat generally used for beef sashimi. Usually, rump steak or round steak would be used for beef sashimi. However, rump steak was generally preferred because it was much chewier than the round steak. Choosing the part of beef to be used for beef sashimi was something that was entirely dependent on the person's preference, and Minhyuk quite preferred the chewiness of the rump steak. Minhyuk pushed his knife forward as he started slicing the rump steak.

Shiik—

Shiik—

The thinly sliced rump steak looked very appetizing with its red color. In fact, its color was perfect. The sliced red rump meat looked glossy and seemed to wiggle when it was poked. After he finished slicing the meat, he used a paper towel to remove the blood.

[Remove blood from the rump steak and season it well for a chewier texture.]

He heard a notification from Food God's Cooking Acquisition. Then, after draining the blood, Minhyuk began to make the sauce. He added two spoons of minced garlic and two spoons of sesame oil for the savory, toasted flavor. Then, he added a spoon of sugar, a spoon of oligosaccharide syrup, half a spoon of sesame seeds, and a dash of pepper to finish the sauce. Although it was optional, he also added some plum extract for a better flavor. Then, he poured the sauce on the rump steak and kneaded it to mix, so that the seasonings would spread over the meat well.

He placed the reddish and well-seasoned slices of beef sashimi along the sides of a round, white plate. Then, he cracked some eggs and separated the yolks from the whites. The yolk was placed in the middle of the plated beef sashimi. The eggs were freshly produced by the golden egg-laying chicken. Minhyuk slurped on the whites that were left after removing the yolk. He personally believed that throwing away any food was bad and it was only proper that he eat it so it would not be wasted. He then sliced the pears thinly and arranged it next to the beef. The beef sashimi was finally plated. The yolk, which was as round as the moon in the sky, the shredded radish, and the thinly sliced pears sat on top of the beef sashimi, giving the dish the look of a delicious flower that bloomed perfectly well.

Gulp—

Minhyuk swallowed his saliva. However, it was not the right time yet. The rest of the meat was not yet placed and cooked on top of the grill! Quickly grabbing his tongs, Minhyuk picked up the meat from the bowl. The marinated beef rib looked perfect with the meat hanging around the bone perfectly. The moment he placed the meat on the grill...

Sizzleeeeeeee!

An entrancing sound rang out, signaling the start of the grilling.

1. A place. It's very cold here so it is said that this was where spicy cold noodles originated. They make spicy cold noodles to fight off the cold. Hamhung noodles are made from buckwheat and sweet potato starch. They are also thinner and chewier than other noodles

2. eye of round part

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While the ribs were getting cooked over the grill, Minhyuk broke apart the yolk on top of the beef sashimi. The egg yolk flowed down and soaked the beef sashimi, along with the shredded radish and thinly sliced pears. Then, he mixed the yolk and the beef sashimi thoroughly. The bright-red beef sashimi and the golden yolk that was mixed well resulted in an extremely appetizing color. Minhyuk placed some pear slices over a big piece of beef sashimi before putting it in his mouth. He firmly believed that the beef sashimi would only taste better if a slice of pear was eaten together with it.

"Aaaaanh," He chomped on the beef sashimi and chewed it well.

Sweetness spread out in his mouth with his first bite. Then, Minhyuk felt the crunchy texture of the pear together with the chewy beef sashimi. He could also feel the savory flavor of the beef and the sesame oil that he had sprinkled on top of it earlier, along with the sweetness of the pear. After Minhyuk finished tasting the beef sashimi, he took out one bowl each of cold noodles and spicy cold noodles. Then, he brought out a pair of scissors and cut the noodles twice in different directions. The noodles that were plated in a circle now became sliced into four pieces. Following his preference, he added some vinegar and mustard on his bowl before scooping out some of the soup.

"This is absolutely perfect!" Minhyuk exclaimed happily, picking up the entire bowl and slurping down the soup loudly.

"Uhmhhh! So good, this is sooooo good!"

The soup was cold enough to make his teeth chatter, but the hint of sourness brought forth a refreshing sensation in his mouth. Then, he quickly clamped some noodles with his chopsticks.

Slurp.

Hamhung noodles were truly thin and chewy! After tasting a bit of the food in front of him, Minhyuk faced the grill and turned over the ribs that he was grilling.

Sizzle—

After cooking that side of the meat for a bit, Minhyuk flipped the meat again. He continued this process for quite a while, before grabbing a pair of scissors and cutting the meat into smaller pieces.

The perfectly grilled marinated beef ribs looked extremely delicious with its glistening sauce. Then, Minhyuk quickly poked the yolk in the bowl of the spicy cold noodles and mixed it well with the rest of the sauce, before placing it in his mouth.

Sluuuuuurp!—

The sweet and spicy flavor that spread gently in his mouth brought a smile to his face. Minhyuk's chopstick then stretched out towards a piece of meat on the grill. He blew rapidly on the meat before taking a bite out of it.

“Hoo! Hoo!” He said. Even after he had picked it up with his chopsticks, the beef marinated ribs were still steaming hot and glistening with oil, so he continued to blow on it to cool it off before taking in its taste.

“Waaa...”

The sweetness and tenderness of the meat spread in Minhyuk's mouth. The flavor of the well-ripened seasoning caused Minhyuk to shudder involuntarily. Then, he picked up a piece of ribs and placed it together with the spicy cold noodles. He picked up both the meat and noodles and ate them together in one bite. The sweet, spicy flavor of the spicy cold noodles and the sweet, mellow flavor of the marinated beef ribs danced together in his mouth. Minhyuk continued to enjoy his marinated ribs with a satisfied smile on his face.

Sluuuuuurp!—

Chew, chew!—

He quickly finished 100 bowls of cold noodles and spicy cold noodles. On top of that, he also finished 20 servings of the marinated beef ribs. He even munched on the bones.

“Buuuuuuuurp!”

Flap, flap, flap, flap!

Minhyuk's loud burp scared the birds from a nearby tree, causing them to fly away. He smiled brightly after he finished eating.

[Food God's True Worth.]

[You can acquire the Minotaurus' skill 'Earth Quake'.]

[Would you like to acquire the skill?]

Of course, before he started eating, he had been asked by Food God's True Worth?to choose the main ingredient. Without any hint of delay, Minhyuk had chosen the Minotaurus' meat.

[Acquisition rate 4%... 8%... 18%... 41%... 58%... 75%... ?88%... ? 94%... ? 100%]

[You have successfully acquired Earth Quake.]

“Ahem,” Minhyuk coughed before nodding in satisfaction and laying down on the ground. He believed that the happiest time in the world was when he laid down after eating a satisfying meal. Then, he checked the contents of the skill?Earth Quake.

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(Earth Quake)

Active Skill

Tier: 4th Class

Mana Required: 250

Cooldown: 20 minutes

Effects: A magical attack that deals 500~600 damage. It can cause a violent earthquake within a ten-meter radius.

Minhyuk shook his head to relieve his drowsiness after he finished checking the contents of the skill. Even though his stomach was not technically full yet, he was still feeling the effects of a food coma. Before he knew it, he had dozed off, laying down peacefully on the grass. This was a sweet and relaxing break.

Meanwhile, as Minhyuk was taking his own sweet time, relaxing and having a break, the entire ceremonial hall was in a frenzy. The champion had disappeared! Cain heard the curious and frantic voices of the players as he entered the awards wall. He had originally been asked to be present for the awards ceremony, together with Alicia. However, the first thing that Cain did was to go to his sister, Lucia, and hand over a large bouquet to her.

Step, step, step—

Cain saw her with her head drooped down. He thought, ‘She must be feeling a great sense of loss.’

He knew how much effort and practice his sister had put in to catch up with him. However, he still believed that this was a fortunate accident. He did not hope his sister would break at a setback at a much later point. After all, anyone who became too strong, too fast, was bound to face obstacles at any point in time. All Cain wanted was for his sister to become flexible and experience more of this world.

He went beside Lucia and handed her the bouquet of flowers that he prepared, saying, “...You did a good job. It was amazing, sister.”

Lucia turned her head when she heard him and gave him a bitter smile. She thought, ‘Am I not the best, after all?’

However, when she thought about it more deeply, it was with a slight sense of relief that the one who won the first place was that person. She thought, ‘Where did you go without me? Were you ashamed of me?’

However, she still believed that Minhyuk stood in front of the minotaurus, blocking its way, because he wanted to save her.

‘So, why did he suddenly disappear?’

Then, Lucia suddenly felt Cain wrap his arms around her shoulders. He said, “My sister is really great.”

Lucia giggled when she heard him, despite her emotions. Cain felt that she was warmer than usual. She was usually more aloof but right now, he felt that she was a lot warmer. Cain suddenly had a hunch. He wondered if his sister was going to open her heart to him and other people now. If not, he would probably try and make her do so.

Then, Lucia piped, "Oppa."

"Hmm?"

"I think... I've fallen for someone."

The moment he heard those words...

Clench—

...Cain's hands clenched tightly. He was smiling at her, but the nerves on his forehead were popping out. Through a forced smile, he asked, "W, who is it?"

"That person earlier."

Clench—

Cain's hands were once again clenched tightly. However, without showing any signs, he said to her, "D...did you do something together?"

"We just ate together."

"What did you eat?"

Lucia tilted her head in confusion when Cain became persistent with his questions. She said, "Ramyeon."

"What...?"

When he heard her words, thousands of thoughts ran rampant in Cain's head. He knew that Lucia, his sister, was not a child that would do something like that. So, the one who made a move must have been that rascal. He thought, 'Did he ask her to eat ramyeon at his place? What a sly wolf! How dare such a f*cking bastard lay a hand on my beloved sister?!'

"R, ramyeon... Hahaha... It must be delicious," Cain said, smiling awkwardly.

Then, Lucia said, "He cooked it personally for me.."

Cain was now convinced that the bastard had seduced his sister! That was not all, as Lucia was not done talking. She said, "He looked really cool when he saved me earlier."

"Sly wolf, fu..."

"Huh?"

"I...it's nothing. Lucia," Cain hurriedly said, already painting a huge, albeit misguided, picture of what Minhyuk did. He then turned around and approached Alicia, who was behind him. He whispered to her so as not to let Lucia hear their conversation,

"Alicia."

“Huh?”

“I’m not going to let that damn bastard off. Should I order the guild to kill him? Or should I lock him up and keep him in jail?! Or maybe I should pull his toenails off if he tries to enter my house...!”

“...”

Alicia wanted to smack him in the back of his head and tell him, ‘You’re misunderstanding everything on your own, you big doofus!’ However, she knew that Minhyuk was exercising constantly to be strong, so even if Cain stormed up to him, he would definitely not be defeated. Unfortunately for her, Alicia had also misunderstood Minhyuk.

Changwook was looking at his mobile phone when he saw the real-time search.

[1. The tournament’s champion has disappeared.]

[2. The champion is an NPC.]

Changwook clicked on the second popular article on the real-time search and saw the comments that flooded the post. He clicked to read the article.

[The champion of Athenae’s tournament this time is an NPC. You can see from the fact that he kept on eating at the convenience store, can someone even eat like that? Look, he ate almost all of the food in the convenience store by himself. And he even solo fought the Level 140 minotaurus? That’s just impossible. I know that the Athenae’s operators are saying that he’s a player, but I still believe that he’s an NPC.]

Netizens kept on creating and compiling rumors, flooding the real-time search. However, Changwook, who knew the truth, somehow could not help but be dumbfounded. Just in time, Minhyuk came out of his capsule.

“Oh, Mister NPC. Hello!”

“...Are you bored? What’s wrong?” Minhyuk asked, looking at Changwook strangely. Changwook coughed in embarrassment as the other staff exclaimed in admiration.

“Wow. Minhyuk, are you really that strong?”

“I got goosebumps when I saw you stand in front of Lucia and face off against the minotaurus.”

“I’m just that kind of person,” Minhyuk said, stroking his chin as he chuckled.

“Where’d you go during the awards ceremony?”

“I went to eat beef.”

“...Beef? Why did you go eat beef when Empress Ellie said that she would go there?”

“Of course, beef is much more important compared to meeting with Empress Ellie.”

“Right... Beef is much more important compared to the empress.”

All of the people present in the room nodded in understanding. The value of meeting Ellie and building a relationship with her might be sky-high, but for Minhyuk, it was truly not that important.

“You know, when you meet with Ellie, she might even give you some sort of legendary class... Ah, that’s right. Didn’t you say that you would rather eat red bean jelly than get the berserker class? Wait,” Changwook said, scratching his head as he gathered his thoughts. Then, he asked, “Right. What did you get when you won?”

“Hyung, did I get something?”

“...Hey, punk, why would you ask me when you were the one who got it?”

The situation from before was so urgent that Minhyuk had to grab the ingredients from the minotaurus urgently. Because of that, he did not have any time to pay attention to others. All he could remember was the notification that he received 10,000 points after he successfully hunted the minotaurus. So, he quickly grabbed his phone to check his rewards.

“My god. You’re the only person who will focus on beef instead of checking his rewards first,” Changwook said. Unfortunately, his words only went in one ear and came out the other.

Minhyuk ignored him and just tapped on his phone. After a while, he said, “Ah, I got that Earth Quake.”

“The one the?minotaurus?had?”

“Yes.”

“That’s amazing. You’re still below Level 100 but you already learned the Earth Quake skill that only Level 200 mages have,” Changwook said in disbelief. Earth Quake was a skill that could only be learned at Level 200, however, there were no skill books available for that. The mages had to go to the Magic Tower to learn. It was a huge AOE skill and could become a huge tool for Minhyuk as he moved on and transitioned from a novice to an intermediate player. However, the most shocking thing was...

“I just can’t believe that you can master any kind of skill...”

It was surprising to know that Minhyuk could master any kind of skill, regardless of class. Usually, skills were limited to classes. For example, warrior skills could only be learned by warrior players, and mage skills could only be obtained by mage players. In fact, Changwook believed that Minhyuk was close to a warrior-class player. However, he just said that he had acquired a mage-class skill. The value of something like this was completely unimaginable.

“Didn’t you get the Minotaurus’ Bone Necklace? Let’s check that out,” Changwook said excitedly. It was funny how Changwook was the excited one, instead of Minhyuk. Related real-time search results kept on popping out the moment Minhyuk searched

for it. This was the necklace artifact that had never been dropped by a minotaurus! Minhyuk checked the information on his phone.

(Minotaurus' Bone Necklace)

Class: Unique

Requirements: None

Durability: 3,000 / 3,000

Defensive Power: 20

Special Abilities:

?+100 increase in WIS

?MP recovery rate increases by 100%.

“Wow! This is really good. Hey, hey, Minhyuk. Look at this. An additional 100 in WIS means that you will get 1000 MP, and there’s also a 100% increase in MP recovery. This is really awesome!”

“Oh, is that a good thing?”

“If your MP recovery rate increased by 100%, it means that instead of recovering 30 MP in 1 minute, you will be able to recover 60 MP in 1 minute. Hey, mages will go crazy for this, you know? Kyaa, there’s even no requirements on it.”

“Oho,” Minhyuk said. He had already decided to increase his MP. Earlier, he felt that his MP of less than 500 was truly a burden whenever he used his skills, so he thought of investing his bonus points to WIS. However, the sudden arrival of this item was a pleasant surprise to Minhyuk.

I’ll be able to eat more delicious food if I get stronger!

Chapter 63: Ellie's Favor

‘This is making me jealous... How lucky can he get...?’ Changwook thought before asking, “Is that all of it? Anything else?”

“I also received 10,000 Achievement Points (AP).”

“T, ten thousand?! I have only received 13,000 APs so far!”

“Wow, Hyung. You must really be bad at games,” Minhyuk said jokingly. In response, Changwook clenched his fists tightly and shot Minhyuk a dirty look. It was not that he was bad at playing, it was just Minhyuk that was too overpowered. APs were not something that one could easily receive.

“That amount is already enough to get something really good. Well, to be fair, everyone thought that all of the participants would just scatter around instead of killing the minotaurus but... you killed it..”

“Ahem,” Minhyuk coughed, shaking his head as he continued to search through Athenae’s official website. What he was searching for was, ‘Using achievement points to buy something delicious.’

[Go to the Chef Tower and use your achievement points to buy ingredients.]

[You can purchase ingredients with your APs in the Chef Tower.]

There were plenty of similar articles, but all of them were filled with negative comments.

[Everyone, here’s a cool tip for you to avoid stepping on poop. It’s a stupid idea to buy ingredients from the Chef Tower using your APs.

fgjkadf31: Why is this a cool tip? If you’re not an idiot, then you should know this, right?

Beanie’sDad: My darling Beanie and the maltese, Kancho, next door also knows this.]

“Hmm?” Minhyuk hummed in confusion. He wondered what was wrong and stupid in using APs to buy ingredients. So, he continued to find more information to help him understand.

[Here are some of the reasons why you shouldn’t buy ingredients using your APs in the Chef Tower.

1) The special abilities that come with the ingredients are incredibly low compared to the APs needed to buy them. Furthermore, chefs do not have any other skills except for their buffing ability. Do we really need to buy a single consumable ingredient just for that?

2) Buying a chef’s hat, chef’s knife, or even a chef’s skill with your APs to increase your buffing ability is much better compared to buying ingredients, right?

These are the two main points. I have seen plenty of novice players buy ingredients without knowing anything to try and increase their cooking skills. They have failed miserably. Don’t do that.]

“Oho,” Minhyuk said, rubbing his chin in thought.

“What are you going to buy with your achievement points?”

“Something delicious.”

“...With all 10,000 points?”

“Yes,” Minhyuk answered firmly, recalling the quest he had received from Coachman Baran about meeting with Blacksmith Ron. Minhyuk thought that Blacksmith Ron should be somewhere near the tower, so he decided to finish the quest along the way.

“What delicious thing should I buy with my 10,000 points? Hoho...”

Ten thousand points would be enough for Changwook to get a lot of rewards. However, it was not his, and to think that it would be used in exchange for something delicious...

Then, Changwook thought, 'What kind of ingredients can you get with 10,000 points?'. He was kind of curious about what Minhyuk would get with his APs.

The next thing that Minhyuk checked on his phone was his notification window. He had been so caught up in trying to find ways to leave the ceremonial hall the moment they got warped for the awards ceremony, that he was not able to check them properly. Fortunately, players could check the notifications that they received in the game on their phones.

[You have acquired 52 million gold.]

[You have won the tournament.]

[You have gained 50 reputation points.]

[You have gained 5,000 APs.]

[You can now learn Ellie's Swordsmanship.]

[You can request a small wish from Ellie.]

"Fifty-two million gold? Does the minotaurus really give this much gold?"

"No, I think it's because it was an event monster this time. Just look at your APs."

Minhyuk had received a total of 15,000 APs together with the chance to learn Ellie's Swordsmanship, an epic skill.

"Wow. Ellie's Swordsmanship. I'm so jealous... I wish I could get an epic skill too..."

Changwook grumbled. The strongest skill in Changwook's arsenal was only a unique skill. The truth is, even if many players wanted to have an epic skill, not many of them could get their hands on one. There was even the reward that Minhyuk could request a small wish from Ellie.

Changwook thought deeply and said, "I got a good idea!"

"...?"

.

"Ask for an epic artifact, or a quest that will lead to an epic artifact. Kyaa! Isn't your Hyung smart?"

Minhyuk thought deeply after hearing Changwook's words. He stood up and said, "S...so there's this method too!"

"Yeah, you're finally listening to your Hyung!" Changwook said, beside himself with joy.

But, Minhyuk turned around on his way into the capsule and said, "I'm going to ask Ellie for something delicious!"

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Changwook, along with the rest of the people monitoring him, stared mutely as he entered the capsule.

Ellie was busy reviewing documents and handling official affairs in her office. She was currently reading a report about some of the most prominent foreigners that appeared in the Eivelis Empire. Ellie could not help but frown as she read through the document, and said, “Black Dragon? He seems to be a great man.”

“That’s right. Your Majesty,” Ruth answered her with a bow. Ruth was someone who had served Ellie since the empress was a child.

“He’s not even at Level 100 yet, but he had bought a merchant’s failing store and made about 1,200% of the original sales. I believe he’s a merchant with great capabilities. It would be good to recruit him if we can.”

“We have already tried to recruit him and offered him a job. But...” Ruth looked downcast as he continued to say, “Black Dragon said?I will fight for one person only, the reason why I’m here, and only one person alone.?and he also said that the reason that he wanted to reach the top was because he wanted to eliminate the obstacles for this person.”

“Ho,” Ellie said, becoming more interested in Black Dragon. She rubbed her chin in thought, knowing full well what Black Dragon was doing. She knew that he was expanding his influence and expanding his power to draw attention away from the person he wanted to protect, becoming the target instead.

‘Isn’t that very cool?’

“However, I’m still in awe of his talents, so I continued my efforts to recruit him, only to be told something with a straight face.”

Ellie’s interest was completely piqued. From what she read, she could tell that the man was stubborn. So, she wondered what he said.

““The being in my right arm is going to go berserk. If you continue to bother me, then I won’t stop my right hand from going crazy.’?That was what he said,?Your? Majesty.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Ellie turned silent for a moment, while Ruth coughed in embarrassment. Then, Ellie said, “He’s quite an unusual foreigner.”

“...Yes, you’re right. Your Majesty. Ah, right, it’s already time for you to eat.”

Ellie shook her head and left the office. When she came to the dining area, she saw the dining table lined up with sumptuous delicacies and enchanting cuisines made by the chefs of the imperial palace! Even ordinary foreigners dreamed of tasting the food on this table at least once in their lives.

However, after only eating a few bites, Ellie sighed and placed her cutlery down, saying, “I have no appetite.”

Ruth felt really sad to see that. Ever since Len left the Imperial Palace, Ellie seemed to have lost her appetite. Even Ruth knew how overwhelmingly superior Len’s dishes were, compared to the dishes that the rest of the imperial palace chefs could do. No matter how hard they tried, they could not find a way to deal with this missing gap.

“Bring that over.”

“Yes!”

However, there was food that could stimulate Ellie’s appetite. It was said to be something that originated from the foreigners’ world. The imperial palace chefs quickly brought the food over. What they placed in front of the empress was a steaming plate of carbonara, together with a dish called ‘spam’.

“Spam. What a strange thing, that it can even bring back someone’s lost appetite.”

Ruth smiled lightly when he heard her words. He watched her pick up her fork to first taste the carbonara, followed by the salty spam. Spam was truly delicious, especially when it was cooked until it was crispy. Since it was salty, Ellie unknowingly ate more carbonara to compensate.

“It’s delicious. It’s really great.”

“I see. It’s great that it’s delicious,” Ruth smiled fondly as he watched Ellie eat. Ellie was someone who had really liked to eat, but ever since Len left, she had lost the spark. Ruth sighed sadly and thought, ‘I haven’t seen her smile ever since that day.’

Ever since Len left, the empress only focused on her duties as an empress. She became tough, cold, detached to the point that people said that she would not bleed even if she was stabbed. Just then, the Phoenix Knight Order’s Leader, Cass, hurriedly walked inside the dining area.

“Sir, didn’t I tell you not to disturb Her Majesty while she’s eating?”

“I know. But Her Majesty also told us to bring the foreigner who won the tournament right away. Isn’t that right?”

Ellie’s fork stopped moving when she heard Cass’ words. She nodded in agreement and asked, “Did he finally come?”

“Yes.”

Ellie's eyes sparkled in excitement, saying, "Let him enter."

"Yes, Your Majesty!" Cass shouted, turning around to get the foreigner quickly.

Ellie was curious about this foreigner. This person was someone that Len had acknowledged, to the point that he even willingly gave the kitchen knife that she had bestowed upon him. This person was also someone that showed outstanding skills and abilities and won the tournament that they held. Not long after, the foreigner came inside and bowed at her. Ellie said, "You're the foreigner, Minhyuk."

"That's right, Your Majesty."

"Are you uncomfortable somewhere?"

"No, no. I'm alright."

However, the foreigner, Minhyuk, was trembling and twitching.

"You might have heard of this already, but I will say it once more. You will be able to learn swordsmanship from me."

"Yes, thank you. Your Majesty."

Ellie looked at him strangely. She thought, 'He doesn't sound happy or excited?'. It was truly strange. There were plenty of people that would do anything for a chance to learn her swordsmanship, but the man in front of her sounded indifferent when he heard about her offer. Then, she heard the foreigner say, "Your Majesty. I heard that since I won the tournament, I could ask Your Majesty for a small wish?"

"...That's right," Ellie answered, her smile turning dark.

'They're all the same. Len.'

It looked like even the foreigner that received the kitchen knife from Len was the same. She had hoped that he was different, special even. After all, he had been acknowledged by Len, the person who loved and cared for her. A pure person that did everything for her even without his sense of taste. He even did his best to increase his DEX just so he could make a dish that would make Ellie happy.

She thought that this foreigner would be just like that, but it seemed like he was not any different from the others. In the end, the foreigner in front of her also desired something. True, as the empress, there were many things that they could ask for, with just her granting of a small wish.

"What do you want? A place where you could find a special treasure? Or do you want to take a few things from my treasure trove? Or do you want a title? Or hundreds of millions of gold? Tell me, and I'll give it to you," Ellie asked. Her interest in him had grown initially after knowing that he went to eat beef, but that interest had now been snuffed. He was just a regular, greedy foreigner.

'They're all like this.'

Hearing her words, the foreigner raised her head and looked at her. His eyes that looked at Ellie were shining brightly, a stark contrast to his sullen and indifferent attitude when he heard that Ellie would teach him swordsmanship. Right now, he looked very excited. He said, "Your Majesty. It's a difficult request, will it still be okay?"

"Tell me. I'm the empress of the Eivelis Empire, Ellie. I will grant you your wish to the best of my abilities."

The man was having a hard time hiding his smile as he said, "Please give me the honor to eat spam!"

At that moment, Ellie was stunned by the request. Even Ruth was left speechless beside her. She could not believe her ears for a moment. So, to make sure, she pointed to the dish on the table and asked again, "Spam...? You mean this?"

"Yes!" The foreigner nodded fiercely as he answered her. Hearing his confirmation...

Grin—

...Ellie grinned and chuckled. Ruth's head whipped to the side at the sudden laugh. And that was when he saw her smiling. Her Majesty was smiling! He did not know how long it had been since he last saw her smile. And then...

"Hahahahahahahahaha!" Ellie hugged her belly as she broke out into peals of laughter.

Chapter 64: Ellie's Favor

Minhyuk was completely taken aback. He had absolutely no idea why Empress Ellie was laughing like this. All he knew was the tantalizing smell that wafted in the air, the moment he came inside the imperial palace. Minhyuk's sixth sense tingled as he thought, 'T, this... This is spam!'

What was spam? It was a delicious ingredient whether one grilled it, roasted, or added it in army stew.

'A slice of spam on top of piping hot rice.'

Minhyuk wholeheartedly agreed with a line of advertisement before, that said that spam was delicious even if it was just grilled on a pan. The thought of eating this delectable food made his body tremble. However, he was worried that Ellie would disagree if she felt it was a weird request from him.

'Hundreds of billions of gold, a title of nobility, even a weapon from the palace's treasury... How dare these things compare themselves with spam?!'

Minhyuk realized that Sword Emperor Ellie was amazing. He was sure that she definitely suggested those things earlier to keep him away from spam! However, Minhuyuk was a stubborn man, he would never give up! He told her politely and firmly, 'I want to eat spam!'

Who knew Ellie had laughed at him like crazy when she heard his request. She was even grabbing her belly from her intense laughter. Ruth, the man standing next to Ellie, was covering his mouth

and hiding his laugh. This made Minhyuk incredibly confused. Then, a series of notifications rang in Minhyuk's head.

[You have received Ellie's favor.]

[You have received Ellie's favor.]

[You have gained +3 in all five of your basic stats.]

[You have gained 5 REP.]

'...What's this?''Minhyuk thought in bewilderment. The only thing that increased was his favor with Ellie, so why did he receive three additional points in all five of his basic stats? He even gained five REP points. However, he did not have the mind to care about that, all he wanted right now was to eat spam. He really wanted to eat spam.

For some reason, he believed that it tasted like soft and ripe persimmons. There was a saying about waiting for persimmon to fall while laying down, which meant waiting for sweet rewards, since the persimmon is sweet and ripe. Perhaps it was alluding towards that! He did not know why but it somehow made sense to him! One thing was for sure though, he was extremely clueless about what was happening around him.

Player Minhyuk, the champion of the tournament, went missing! All of the Athenae employees were in a frenzy at the sudden state of emergency. They conducted several meetings to curb the rumors spreading wildly outside. During one of the meeting breaks, Team Leader Park went back to his own department to get a brief respite, only to be greeted by Lee Minhwa's startled gasp.

"Gasp!"

"...What's wrong?"

"I think it's best that you see it yourself," Lee Minhwa said, making space for Team Leader Park to look at the monitor. What he saw on the monitor was...

[Sword Emperor Ellie's favor towards Player Minhyuk has increased.]

[Sword Emperor Ellie's favor towards Player Minhyuk has increased.]

[Depending on the increase in favor, Player Minhyuk will receive +3 in all five of his basic stats and an additional 5 REP.]

"H, he has already gained Ellie's favor?"

"Yes, it's exactly what you're seeing..."

"How the hell did he do that?"

"There was a reward where he can ask Ellie for a small wish, right?"

Team leader Park nodded his head seriously and continued to listen.

“He told her that his wish was to eat spam. When Ellie heard his request, she burst out in laughter.”

“E, Ellie did...?” Team Leader Park asked.

To witness Ellie laugh was a very rare chance, a once in a blue moon incident. Ellie was a very special NPC that had gained a lot of attention from the public. Players could receive various quests and rewards through Ellie. One such quest was related to gaining her favor. However, because she was an empress, it was nigh impossible to acquire her favor. After all, gaining favor meant that the player had to capture Ellie’s heart and build a close relationship with her.

How could anyone easily win the heart of the Empress? Just meeting her alone required the player to meet several harsh conditions. Merchants needed to have the capability to increase the finances of Eivelis Empire by 20%, while warriors needed to be able to stand on ground and be on equal footing with Ellie using the sword. These were the conditions needed just for players to meet with Ellie, which further highlighted the difficulty of building a close relationship with her, not to mention gaining favor. Once they had accomplished that feat, the operators would be notified at once.

However, Minhyuk was able to gain Ellie's favor, just because of spam? Intimacy was not something that a player could easily increase just because they gained favor once before. They had to show their worth, and not make the NPC hate them.

“He used his small wish for spam.... He never fails to surprise us every day,” Team Leader Park sighed in amusement. He had always found the things that Player Minhyuk did to be fresh and surprising every time.

“He is probably unaware though, right?” Lee Minhwa mumbled before speaking out loud again, “How good it is to gain favor with just some remarks.”

Hundreds of billions of gold? A weapon from the palace treasury? Or an amazing quest? No, Player Minhyuk had gained something that was worth more than all of those combined. He had won the heart of the Sword Emperor Ellie. It was a huge power to wield. Even they, as the operators, did not even know what kind of variable Ellie would become if she treated Minhyuk well.

“If Minhyuk continues to gain Ellie's favor, then he would receive rewards, right?”

Team Leader Park nodded and said, “That’s right. But since the NPCs have a high degree of freedom, our only uncertainty is what Ellie will be willing to do for Player Minhyuk.”

The thing that an empress could do for a player... even Team Leader Park did not know what that was.

“Do you really just want to eat this spam?”

“Yes!” Minhyuk exclaimed, nodding his head furiously like a starved chick pecking on grains.

Seeing him like that, Ellie beckoned with a smile as she said, “Come here.”

“But, Your..”

“Shut up.”

“Yes!”

Knight Leader Cass tried to voice out his concerns, but Ellie quickly shut him down with a cold look. The empress dining and sharing a table with a foreigner?! This was a sight that could never be seen anywhere else. However, Minhyuk quickly sat down across from the empress. The moment he did, he looked at the table strangely. Seeing his expression, Ellie asked, “What’s the matter?”

“I’m extremely grateful to you, Your Majesty.”

“You can speak comfortably. I know that foreigners aren’t used to this type of speech.”

“Then, should I call you Ellie-noona instead, Your Majesty?”

“That sounds nice,” Ellie said. The expressions of the servants standing by the walls turned to one of disbelief.

‘Noo...Noona...?’

‘You’re going to call Her Majesty, the empress, Noona?’

As for Ellie, this was something akin to a breath of fresh air. So, she readily and graciously accepted. In fact, she even graciously let Minhyuk’s transgression pass before. After all, Ellie fully understood why Minhyuk disappeared to eat beef. While she was the empress who was famous for her aloofness, she was also a woman that could do things beyond her subjects and vassals’ expectations once in a while. Besides, Minhyuk had met a lot of big shots in reality. He was someone who called the former president and the members of the National Assembly ‘Big Dad’, ‘Uncle’ and even ‘Gramps’. This was possible because his father was Chairman Kang Minhoo. Therefore, something like this was only natural for him.

“Noona, why are you eating such a poor meal? This brother of yours, Minhyuk, feels heartbroken for you.”

“Is it not delicious?” Ellie asked, taken aback. He was still quite delighted a few moments ago, but now he was looking heartbroken already.

“There’re many different ways of eating spam.”

“Ooh? Is that so?” Ellie asked, interest slowly being piqued.

“Yes! Shall I make it for you?”

“Alright,” Ellie answered, readily nodding in consent. A more delicious way to eat this delicious food? For a foodie like her, finding more ways to eat the food deliciously was good news for her.

“I will need ingredients.”

“You can be at ease. Speak comfortably.”

“Can I really speak with ease?”

Ellie smiled gently. Her smile definitely looked like a mother’s smile!

“I need 100 cans of spam, 30 bowls of salted squid and shrimp, 200 bags of instant rice, 200 sheets of laver, and 100 servings of spicy dipping sauce.”

“...Don’t tell me that you’re going to eat them all?”

“Ellie-noona will eat too, right? I want our beautiful empress to eat to her heart's content,” Minhyuk said. However, his thoughts were completely different. He thought, ‘Hohohoho. I’m going to eat so much more spam compared to you.’

However, Ellie, being innocently unaware, happily nodded after hearing Minhyuk praise her beauty. She ordered, “Prepare it.”

“Yes!” The imperial palace chefs answered quickly and moved to prepare the ingredients. The ingredients appeared in front of him in no time at all. The first thing that Minhyuk did was to tug strongly at the pull tab on the can of spam. The lid came off easily, but the contents did not come off despite Minhyuk shaking it down the cutting board.

‘This is the problem with spam!’

It almost always did not come out well. According to general instructions, pressing down on the sides of the can would allow the spam to slide off easily, but it often did not work. If that happened, the most usual solution was to pull it out with a kitchen knife. However, before Minhyuk could even do that, Ellie whipped her fingers. Her mana stretched out gently and dragged the spam out of the can.

“Wow, so cool! Ellie-noona!”

“Hohoho!”

Minhyuk looked at her mana in awe, like a child who saw something exciting. With the spam out of the can, Minhyuk began to cut it into slices before placing them on top of the heated frying pan.

Sizzle—

The spam slowly began grilling in the frying pan. Spam was extremely delicious when cut thickly and grilled to a golden brown. After he grilled it properly, he placed the slices on top of the plate and added a spoonful of spicy dipping sauce on one side and a dollop of ketchup on the other side. Then he took out the instant rice that the imperial palace chefs had graciously placed in the microwave for him and opened the lid.

Steam came out of the bowl. Minhyuk quickly placed it on the table to maintain the heat. Just like that, the piping hot spam meal was done!

“Spam goes better with rice than carbonara or spaghetti,” Minhyuk said, smiling lightly as he scooped a spoonful of rice. Ellie, despite being a bit clumsy, watched him closely and followed his movements. Then, Minhyuk placed a piece of spam on top of the rice and said...

“Noona, you should follow me.”

“I’m following what you’re doing.”

“...?”

“???”

Ellie looked at him strangely. Then, Minhyuk said, “Steaming rice~ and a piece of spam.”

“Steaming rice~ and a piece of spam,” Ellie said, following what he had just said. Then, Minhyuk took the plump slice of spam, with rice on his spoon, and placed them in his mouth in one bite, which Ellie followed too. The grains of rice and the golden spam met in their mouths.

Spam was salty. It was definitely categorized as a salty food. However, it also had the rich flavor of ham. The salty, savory flavor of the spam spread in his mouth with every bite. The rice easily caught the saltiness and greasiness of the spam creating a pleasing harmony of flavors inside the mouth.

Minhyuk scooped another spoonful of rice and delivered it to his mouth. Spam was called a rice thief because it could make anyone eat more rice with how salty and savory it was! Ellie also scooped more rice as she ate the spam. She then closed her eyes and savored the taste and said, “...Oh my god...” Ellie shook her head slowly, feeling the heavenly taste of this delicacy.

“I have been naive and ignorant,” Ellie said. Her expression was so solemn and profound, as if she had found out a secret of the world. Then, she continued to say, “How did I not know of this delicious delicacy? And I only ate this with spaghetti all this time? How lamentable! This is truly deplorable!”

Minhyuk watched her as she ate and thought, ‘This noona... She’s strange...’?Of course, his spoon never stopped moving.

“Then, Noona, this time, you should try it with salted shrimp and squid!”

Minhyuk picked up some salted squid and shrimp with his chopsticks. The red sauce surrounding the salted squid and shrimp was glistening as he placed it on top of his rice before eating it. The taste of the salted squid and shrimp with rice was enough for Minhyuk to eat at least three bowls of rice! If one had completely lost their appetite, just mix it with rice, and their appetite would definitely come back. Then, Minhyuk wrapped the spam in a piece of seaweed and dipped it in some spicy dipping sauce.

Whatever Minhyuk did, Ellie followed. Just like that, the two of them ate happily. Ellie finished her meal in satisfaction as she looked at Minhyuk gently.

Chew, chew! Minhyuk was chewing quickly and inhaling the food in front of him.

“It wasn’t an expensive meal, but I did not expect it to satisfy me this much. It’s even better than what the imperial palace chefs always prepare for me,” Ellie declared.

Empress Ellie’s words were enough to shock everyone present. After all, the imperial palace chefs were considered to be the best of the best in the empire! A canned spam turned out to be much more delicious for their empress than what they did. Of course, it might be because they never understood what Ellie wanted from the start. However, there was someone here who finally understood her. And that was none other than Minhyuk.

Minhyuk stopped eating for a bit and looked at her seriously to say, “It’s not those expensive meals, or those meals that cost hundreds of thousands of won that could satisfy a person.”

Minhyuk was someone who had everything. He could get everything he wanted except for losing his weight. Even in reality, whenever he thought about the food that he craved, none of the expensive high-quality food like foie gras, shark fin, or caviar came to mind.

“Good food is something that can make everyone happy, even if it’s not expensive, right?” Minhyuk asked, to which Ellie nodded in agreement and understanding.

That was right. These words touched her heart deeply. Good food was truly something that could make people happy even if it was not expensive. She smiled bitterly and thought, ‘He’s right.’? Ellie had wondered how this foreigner could move the hearts of both her and the man that she once loved, and now she knew.

Then, notifications rang for Minhyuk again.

[You have received Ellie’s favor.]

[You have gained 1 Skill Point (SP).]

Chapter 65: Ellie's Favor

Minhyuk once again received a reward after Ellie's favor towards him had increased! However, he did not care. All he did was continue eating spam while the imperial palace chefs continuously refilled his plate. In the end, they had to speak up.

“W...we’ve run out of spam!”

“...Exactly how much did he eat?” Ellie asked, looking at Minhyuk strangely.

One of the imperial palace chefs answered, “He ate a total of 356 cans of spam, 120 packs of salted squid and shrimp, 160 sheets of laver, and 600 packs of instant rice.”

Ellie blinked blankly at the sheer amount of food. Then, Minhyuk smiled happily and said, “Noona, we ate a lot right? See, I told you. If we put a lot of food on the table, then we would be able to eat a lot too, right?!”

Minhyuk flaunted his high-level flattery skills that even Ellie was left with no choice but to agree. She said, “...Y...y...yeah.?That, that’s?right.”

Those were the only words that came out of Ellie’s mouth. It seemed like she was speechless. Just then, Minhyuk recalled something,?‘Ah, there’s that...’

When Minhyuk first met Ellie, he had received the notification that he had completed the quest 'Meet Ellie'. He even gained 15,000 EXP and leveled up. He said, "Ah, wait. Ellie-noona. I know that I came here to see my pretty noona, but I also came here because Master Len asked me for a favor."

"Len..." Ellie mumbled. She had seen Minhyuk use Ellie's Kitchen Knife during the competition. She had not forgotten that fact yet. She nodded silently and asked, "Okay. What did he ask you to do?"

"He asked me to cook something delicious for you."

Minhyuk had obviously cooked some spam for her, but he did not get notified that the quest was completed. It seemed like Ellie was as much of a foodie as he was. So, Minhyuk thought, 'I'll definitely receive a delicious quest!'

However, Ellie's forehead crumpled in distress. She said, "He didn't come to meet me in person in the end... but..."

Ellie knew that Len left this place because of her, and she had just meekly accepted everything that happened back then. However, that was already a long time ago. Even her feelings were bound to fade to some extent.

"What dish would you like me to cook for you?"

"But Minhyuk, you... Aren't you a warrior player?" Ellie asked, confused. She had clearly watched Minhyuk hunt down the minotaurus during the tournament. His moves were completely unconventional and so overwhelming that Ellie herself thought of recommending him to become a member of the Phoenix Knight Order.

"Uhhh..." Minhyuk hummed, thinking deeply. He was a chef and a warrior at the same time. However, he was also a farmer. He could also learn and use magic skills. His conclusion?

"I can do everything."

"You learned a lot of different things?"

"That's right."

.

"How surprising," Ellie said, impressed. This was her first time seeing a foreigner learn a lot of different things. But what was most surprising was...

'How can a foreigner be so strong when he has learned a lot of different things?'

...his strength was beyond normal, despite not specializing. Just looking at him right now and seeing the aura that emanated from his body made Ellie realize why he had won the tournament back then.

“I wonder where your strength comes from.”

“I just eat well and work out well.”

“...Right,” Ellie said, smiling brightly. For some reason, Ellie felt at ease with him here. At that moment, Ellie realized that she was catering to his every whims. After realizing this, she decided to just steer the topic back to the main point. She asked, “Can I ask you to make me anything that I want to eat?”

“Of course.”

“I want to eat flatfish and rockfish sashimi.”

“...!”

Minhyuk’s eyes widened in shock. Flatfish and rockfish? There were people who went to the fish market just to say, “We can eat flatfish, rockfish and eel there!” He imagined himself dipping the white, translucent piece of flatfish and rockfish in soy sauce and wasabi, before putting it in his mouth and savoring the delicious, savory and chewy sashimi! Then, after eating that?

‘Auntie, can we please have the spicy fish stew right now! Please add ramyeon too!’

Once everything was set up, Minhyuk would take a sip and say, “I need to boil it some more, the longer you boil it, the more delicious it gets.”

Then, he would take another spoonful and take a sip after boiling it some more. What would happen then? Minhyuk would definitely taste the perfect amount of spicy seasoning and the refreshing flavor of the soup!

And Ellie was telling him that she wanted to eat that flatfish and rockfish?

Minhyuk was completely excited at the thought of eating those fish, and in his excitement, he blurted, “Why did a rockfish blush?”

“...?”

“Because it saw the ocean's bottom.”

“Minhyuk, I’m going to get angry right now.”

Pause!

Minhyuk trembled in fear because he felt that she was definitely telling the truth. Then, Ellie continued on with a serious look on her face. She said, “I once went fishing with my late father, the Emperor, His Majesty Ellen. That was the first time that my father cooked for me. He used the fish that we caught to make me a rockfish sashimi and a spicy fish stew.”

Her lips unconsciously curled up as she recalled the memories of the past. She continued to say, “His Majesty Ellen always stressed that I should become a strong empress. It was also the reason why he always forced me to practice my swordsmanship. I have always hated him for that. However, I realized that after he had left me, I couldn’t forget the taste of the spicy fish stew and the sashimi that he made for me.”

Ellie smiled slightly at the memory. She said, "My father wanted me to become a strong empress because he loved me. His figure is still vivid in my eyes."

She closed her eyes, as if she could still see the vision of her father watching over her during her training. Then she asked, "Help me to relive the taste of my father's cooking."

[Linked Quest: Make a Rockfish Sashimi for Ellie.]

Rank: B

Requirements: Meet Ellie

Rewards: Ellie's Swordsmanship, Ancient Cooking Ingredients

Penalty for Failure: Lose Ellie's favor.

Description: Ellie just recalled the memories of her past. She wants to eat the fresh rockfish sashimi that you make. Give her a rockfish sashimi!

Minhyuk thought that she would ask for the dish that Len cooked for her in the past. It turned out that she actually wanted to eat the food that she could not forget in her memory. However, it made sense. After all, he also had that kind of food. Whenever Minhyuk went over to visit his late grandmother, she would always grill some rice cake for him and drizzle it with honey. The crunchy grilled rice cake was truly delicious especially when it met with honey. Whenever he ate the grilled rice cake, his grandmother would always bring him some fruits and chestnuts that he could eat together with the rice cake.

'Grandma, I'm stuffed.'

'My baby, you should eat some more. You're eating so well.'

Whenever he went to his grandmother's house, he would always eat a lot. It was such a good memory. Then he looked at the rewards listed on the quest. He saw 'Ancient Cooking Ingredients listed there'. Although Minhyuk did not know what it was, he was sure that it was something 'delicious'. He declared with anticipation, "I'll give you a delicious rockfish sashimi!"

"Don't forget the spicy rockfish stew."

"Of course. That's something that can never be forgotten. Hohohoho!"

Ellie grinned at him as she stood up. Then, she said, "Let's go now."

"Where are we going?"

"You need to learn my swordsmanship."

"Ah, that's right. I have to learn swordsmanship, wait. Ah~ I really have to work hard~" Minhyuk answered half-heartedly as he stood up to follow behind her.

Ellie looked at him strangely and asked, "A...are you not happy to learn my swordsmanship?"

"I'm happy, I'm so happy that I'm going to burst into tears!"

"..."

Ellie was left speechless for a moment. She thought, 'Does he really only care about eating?' Foreigners all over the world were clamoring to learn her swordsmanship. Not long ago, there was someone who made a ruckus because he wanted to learn her swordsmanship and as a result, was sent to prison for 10 years. However, Minhyuk was not even the slightest bit interested in it since it was not related to eating.

Then, Ellie suddenly thought of a brilliant idea. She said, "Every time you complete a portion of the swordsmanship, I will give you the opportunity to get one special ingredient from the Imperial Palace's Ingredients Warehouse."

"...What are we waiting for, let's go!" Minhyuk answered loudly, his steps quickening. Not long after, the two of them arrived at the training grounds.

"As you can see, the wooden puppets are divided into blue and white."

"Yes!" Minhyuk answered. He was filled with excitement and enthusiasm, making Ellie feel that her carrot tactic was successful.

"The blue wooden puppets can be destroyed easily depending on your damage. But the white wooden puppet is different. Would you like to try hitting the white wooden puppet?" Ellie asked, throwing a wooden sword towards Minhyuk.

Minhyuk grabbed the sword and tried to slash at the white wooden puppet with all his might, while thinking in his mind, 'Imperial palace's ingredients! Let's eat them!'

Slash!

As soon as he slashed, a notification rang in his head.

[You have struck the training wooden puppet.]

[499/500 hits until the puppet is destroyed.]

"Oh?"

It was a unique wooden puppet. The puppet couldn't be destroyed with damage, but with the number of hits.

"This wooden puppet can only be found in the Eivelis Empire. Every time that you destroy it, you will be able to get a bonus point. You can raise your stat that cannot easily be raised otherwise, via this bonus point."

"T...then can I increase my DEX?"

Ellie nodded and said, "It's possible, everything is possible, unless it's a really special stat. This is my gift to you."

Ellie grinned at him. If she did not teach him swordsmanship, then Minhyuk would not be able to lay his hands on these wooden puppets. Minhyuk pondered about how he would go about doing this.

'If I use Three Consecutive Quick Assault and Haste, then I can probably strike faster.'

However, Ellie could guess what he was thinking. She immediately said, “Sadly, you can’t use skills to raise the strike count. You have to strike the wooden puppet with your pure strength. And if you hit it repetitively, then a variety of your stats will increase. Just like when you first came to? Athenae.”

“I see.”

“Now this time, hit the blue wooden puppet. You can use your skills, just hit it with your most powerful strike.”

When he heard her say that, Minhyuk prepared himself to give his most powerful strike.

[Bardy Swordsmanship]

[+20 to all 5 basic stats for 10 minutes.]

[Vital Strike]

[Additional 28% attack power for each successful strike.]

The vital points appeared all over the blue wooden puppet’s body. Minhyuk chose one and stabbed it with all his might.

Stab!

However, the wooden puppet did not move an inch, let alone crack and be destroyed. Ellie took a step forward and said, “Now, I’ll show you. Ellie’s Swordsmanship’s first chapter has the same movement as what you did earlier. Chapter 1: Sword of Fury.”

Red light covered her wooden sword. Although she said that the movement was similar, her posture was completely different. She was just standing there and holding her sword, but her posture was overflowing with grace and dignity. Then, she stabbed the same blue wooden puppet that Minhyuk stabbed earlier. Her stab was accompanied by the sound of air ripping in two.

Rip!

Stab!

Ellie stabbed the blue wooden puppet directly, shattering it into pieces.

Bang!

However, it did not end there. The blue wooden puppets behind the puppet that she struck were shattered one by one, with the force that came out of her sword.

Bang!

Bang!

Shwaaaa!

The remnants of the puppets scattered in the air like ash falling from the sky.

Chapter 66: Army Stew Made with Elixir

“Phew,” Ellie breathed lightly, lowering the wooden sword in her hands.

“Wow...” Minhyuk exclaimed in surprise. The destructive power that Ellie had displayed was so overwhelming that even Minhyuk, who was usually focused and preoccupied with food, could not help but gasp in awe.

“I will teach you four moves in total.”

“Yes!”

“After I teach you the moves, you have to repeatedly strike the wooden puppets with those moves. You only have one week to master them.”

“I understand,” Minhyuk answered, and Ellie began to demonstrate and teach him a set of movements. The moves were simple: a stab, an indiscriminate sword slash, a quick step back and a strike going down. The way that NPCs trained the players was usually quite monotonous. It was made that way so the players would understand the contents of the training and would be able to follow and learn them easily.

[You have mastered the basics of Ellie’s Swordsmanship.]

[Please repeat the movements to train Ellie’s Swordsmanship.]

[An invisible training progress has been created.]

[Your training progress will remain invisible for a week.]

“What does the invisible training progress mean?”

“It means that you can’t determine it.”

“Can’t determine?”

“It will depend on the amount of effort and perseverance you put in the training.”

“Aha,” Minhyuk said. Although Ellie only explained it briefly, Minhyuk was still able to understand it. What it meant was that the power that he could exert using Ellie’s Swordsmanship would depend on how much effort he would use to train within that one week.

“Anyway, work hard. I’ll give you an ingredient for every two puppets you destroy. Just one for every two puppets. No more than that.”

“Yes!” Minhyuk answered loudly, watching Ellie step out of the training grounds. Then, he sat down on the spot and went to Athena’s official website. What he searched for was, ‘Eivelis Imperial Palace Food’. Plenty of related search words and articles popped out on the website.

[Guys, I’ve got a job as a chef in the imperial palace of Eivelis Empire. I even got a hidden class, yep. ‘Master of Peeling.’ I can peel onions really well. I can peel five onions in under one minute.

gsdfadl3:?Lol, hahahaha. Are you really peeling onions in the game?

shinchanisthirsty: My goodness... Still a laborer even inside the game...

.

BlackDragontheCookingKing: But it's alright. You can try a lot of different things here. The food here is so damn delicious ??

Janggeumie: What if Ellie asks you, will you say 'How can I answer why it tastes like onions when it really tastes like onions?'. Hahahahaha

AGourmet: Oh, but since you can eat a lot of delicious food then it's okay, right? What's the most delicious food?

BlackDragontheCookingKing: It's ham. Ellie really likes spam so maybe that's why the ham in here is really delicious. And all the ham in here are made out of C-grade ingredients. Yep. But of course, I still can't eat ham that often here.

Janggeumie: Lies. Which empress would eat spam?]

"Oho. So it's ham!" Minhyuk said. He found out that the next most delicious food right after spam was regular ham. Minhyuk could only think of a dish with all those ingredients in consideration.

"A, army stew...!" Minhyuk shouted. It was a dish made with ham, kimchi, dumplings, and ramyeon noodles put together. People of all ages loved it. After finally deciding what to eat and setting his goal, Minhyuk stood up and approached one of the wooden puppets to start his training.

Slash!

Slash!

Slash!

'I will eat...! Army stew...!'

Stab!

Stab!

Stab!

Minhyuk believed that Ellie had made a mistake tempting him with ingredients. Since she did that, he would live up to her expectations and even go beyond that, to get all the ingredients that he needed for army stew! So, Minhyuk continuously struck at the wooden puppet. He trained without taking a break. An hour later, Minhyuk was completely drenched in sweat. He could also feel his back and arms starting to go numb from the pain. A strong desire to take a rest crept up the back of his head. However, Minhyuk endured it.

'It will be very delicious if I put ramyeon noodles in my army stew!'

Thwack! Slash!

Two hours of intense training later, Minhyuk's back felt like it was going to snap in two. He could not even feel his wrists anymore. However, the wooden puppet still remained pristine, without a single scratch on its surface. Minhyuk thought, 'Two of you have to die if I want to get one ingredient and taste that spicy soup!'

Slash! Stab!

Three hours later, Minhyuk's body was shaking terribly to the point that it was difficult to stand up on his own. However, he still persevered. He believed that eating would become more delicious after doing hard work. Minhyuk had always lived by those words. In reality, even if he worked hard, he would not be able to eat any delicious food, but it was possible here. So, he swung his sword to achieve that. He could not collapse right now if he wanted to do that. His will to eat was so strong that it allowed him to persevere.

Slash!

Stab!

Three and a half hours later...

Baang!

...a white wooden puppet broke down into pieces.

[You have obtained 1 Special Point (SP).]

[You can also invest your special points on stats that can't be raised with bonus points.]

"Oho!" Minhyuk shouted happily, quickly investing the SP to his DEX. Then, he rested for five minutes before continuing his striking spree. Minhyuk kept on striking and striking the wooden puppets until...

[You have increased your STR by 1.]

[You have increased your AGI by 1.]

[You have increased your Will by 1.]

"Oh... Will!" Minhyuk said in surprise. Minhyuk was able to increase his Will by eight points inside the Farming Dungeon. This stat was extremely different from regular stats. It was very touching for him to receive even a one point increase in this stat. Although he was not aware, his Will was the only thing that was keeping him up despite his body's huge urge to fall down from exhaustion. It was due to this stat that he was able to continue swinging his sword at the wooden puppets.

Bang!

Three days later.

Ellie was heading towards the training grounds. She did not have the time to check up on Minhyuk's progress these past few days as she was busy with the empire's affairs. She said, "Destroying two a day might be too much for him."

Even so, if Minhyuk was able to destroy two wooden puppets in one day, his progress in Ellie's Swordsmanship would still increase by a lot. Ellie believed that the progress that he would accumulate in that one week was enough to give any foreigner like Minhyuk a huge boost in strength. However, Ellie thought that it might still be too hard for Minhyuk to destroy two wooden puppets in a day. After all, this process was long, tedious, and so monotonous, that anyone was bound to give up at some point.

She wondered if he even received at least one SP. To get one SP, one had to hit the wooden puppet 500 times. This was a very tedious and tiring chore, right? However, that was on top of a difficult condition. Was there something more difficult than hitting a wooden puppet alone in an empty and quiet training ground? But when Ellie opened the door to the training grounds and saw what Minhyuk was doing...

"Sword of Fury."

...her eyes widened in shock. Minhyuk's sword was covered in red light as he clenched the hilt of this sword tightly and stabbed at one of the blue wooden puppets in the training grounds.

Stab!

His sword was embedded deeply in the middle of the blue wooden puppet.

"...H...how is this possible?" Ellie gasped, eyes growing as wide as saucers.

Minhyuk turned to look at Ellie when he heard her shout in surprise. He had just learned the four basic movements of Ellie's Swordsmanship so he wanted to try and test out the skill on the very first day. When he tried it, the notification only showed him this:

[Sword of Fury]

The usual words that were written under the skill description did not come out, even the progress percentage did not show. When he struck the wooden puppet with the skill, all he managed to do was shake the puppet. However, that much disturbance was enough. That was the reason why Minhyuk always tried to use the skill whenever he tried to destroy a wooden puppet. As time went by, the damage that he could inflict on the wooden doll increased. In other words, his skill was growing as his training progressed further. As proof, he was able to stab the wooden puppet with his sword. A feat that was incomparable to destroying the wooden puppet, but still amazing nonetheless.

"You're here?" Minhyuk greeted Ellie as he wiped the sweat off of his forehead. Meanwhile, Ellie looked at the surroundings.

"..."

She was at a loss for words. There were a total of sixteen wooden puppets lying down on the ground, broken into pieces.

"H...how did this happen..."

Even Ellie, a person that had seen a lot in this world, was astonished. One could break a wooden doll in five hours at the fastest. That was to say that the person striking the puppet would hit the wooden puppet seventy times in an hour. But, was that something that could be done repetitively? It was something that was very difficult for anybody to accomplish in a single day.

Yet, in front of her eyes, there were sixteen puppets lying around. This meant that Minhyuk had destroyed around six puppets in a single day. Ellie could tell that Minhyuk had devoted all of his time to swinging his sword and striking the wooden puppets, only allowing himself the most minimum break.

“Since I destroyed sixteen puppets, that means I will get eight ingredients. Hohohoho!” Minhyuk said happily. It seemed like he was powered by the will to eat delicious food.

Ellie looked at Minhyuk and noticed the hilt of the wooden sword in his hands. The hilt was dyed red with the blood from Minhyuk’s hand. She thought, ‘My god...’

Athenae had always promoted realistic representations of reality. Ellie could tell that Minhyuk’s hands had bled from his skin peeling off from extreme training. This was the main cause for the sword to be dyed red in blood. In fact, it was a bit insignificant, and the foreigners had natural healing and recovering abilities. This amount of injury was usually enough for their healing ability to recover.

However, the fact that the sword had been dyed with blood despite the healing power meant that Minhyuk had been swinging his sword non-stop, his natural healing ability failing to keep up with his injuries. This was something extremely surprising, even for Ellie. Nonetheless, she did not let it show on her expression.

“How did this happen, how did you make such a mess? Clean this up. Look at this mess!”

Minhyuk thought that Ellie would praise him, but contrary to what he expected, he received a fierce scolding. Minhyuk looked at her dumbfoundedly, before jumping out and shouting, “Gasp!? I’m gonna clean this up. You have to give me my ingredients!”

Ellie chuckled to herself when she heard his words. She thought, ‘Len... I think I know the reason why you chose him.’

Ellie could now understand why Len gave Minhyuk Ellie’s Kitchen Knife. She already knew that this foreigner was very strange. He was someone who liked food, so much that he would put it above everything else. However, through the training, she realized that Minhyuk was also someone that worked hard, giving his all to the things and tasks that he was given.

‘He might have learned a lot of different things, but it seems like this is the reason why he’s so strong.’

Ellie nodded and thought, ‘It’s completely possible.’. Even though she would only teach Minhyuk four chapters, in other words half, of Ellie’s Swordsmanship, Ellie believed that Minhyuk would be able to exert the greatest power that this swordsmanship could offer. Ellie grinned as she watched Minhyuk frantically clean up the mess in the training grounds, thinking to herself that she wanted to

get closer with Minhyuk. If anyone who knew her found out what she was thinking, they would definitely be surprised.

Lee Seokhoon, the team leader of the development team, accessed Athenae. Despite being one of the operators, he still had to access the game. This was so they could prepare for Athenae's future update.

Generally, operators had to often meet with influential NPCs inside Athenae in order to proceed with the update. They had to discuss with them and subtly direct them towards the general course of action that they needed to do in the future. It was because of this that they had been hailed as the influential envoys of the God of Athenae. This title made the NPCs treat them favorably, some would even go as far as worship them.

'We need Ellie's help to open up the Northern Continent.' Lee Seokhoon thought. That was also the reason why he came to Eivelis Empire's Imperial Palace. He needed to meet Ellie to help the update proceed in that direction. Not long after, the knight leader appeared and greeted Lee Seokhoon.

As they walked past the halls of the imperial palace, Lee Seokhoon thought, 'I heard that Player Minhyuk is also in the palace.' Lee Seokhoon did not know what Minhyuk was up to but he had a hunch that the Special Players Management Team would know.

'Ah, I have to speak formally with Ellie.'

Even if the development team and the God of Athenae were working together, every time Seokhoon went to see Ellie, she would receive him with a cold stare. He always had a hard time whenever he approached her. He felt like he would be stabbed with a sword if he did anything wrong. Seokhoon soon saw the door to the throne room open.

"Have you been well?"

Ellie nodded in answer as she reached out for the parchment filled with the instructions from God of Athenae that Seokhoon was handing over. The NPCs had no choice but to follow the instructions in the parchment. This was because the God of Athenae was the absolute ruler of this world. However, even though she would follow, Ellie still could not help but shake her head at the contents of the parchment.

Lee Seokhoon started his explanations to clear up any questions that the empress might have. He said, "The God of Athenae has continuously asked the envoys to pioneer the march towards the Northern Continents. And since there are quite a number of monsters blocking our path, we are requesting the Eivelis Empire to support us with 20,000 troops."

Just as Ellie was about to nod her head, the door to the throne room opened. A young man burst inside and shouted, "Ellie-noona!"

'D...did he just say noona?! Gasp?!' Lee Seokhoon thought, freaking out inside.

'The man was referring to Empress Ellie as noona? He said noona, right?'

In fact, Lee Seokhoon thought that it was more fitting to call Ellie 'Old Woman' instead.

'I don't know what's going through this crazy guy's head, but I'm sure that he will end up in jail.' Lee Seokhoon thought, turning around to look at the player's face. He could see a strangely familiar player running towards Ellie excitedly. The player was none other than Minhyuk.

"Gasp?!"

This was the second gasp that he had unknowingly let out in the span of a minute.

Chapter 67: Army Stew Made with Elixir

"...What's wrong?"

"It, it's nothing," Lee Seokhoon shook his head and answered hurriedly. He looked at Minhyuk in shock and thought, 'What in the world is this player doing...'

Seokhoon did not know what this player was going to eat, but he believed that this player would definitely be in a very, very, very huge trouble soon. However, he soon realized his assumption was completely off.

"You know that today is the last day, right? I just stopped by while I was on my way to the bathroom."

"Yeah. I'll be right there shortly, you hippo," Ellie said.

What Seokhoon expected did not happen at all. In fact, Ellie was even smiling gently at Minhyuk, much like that a mother often has!

'W, what's this?' Seokhoon thought, not understanding the entire situation. From what he could see, Minhyuk was acting very friendly towards the empress to the point that he was treating her like an older sister living next door. On the other hand, Ellie was smiling at him as if she was looking at her younger brother, no... her son.

'N...no. Ellie, you're the empress!' Seokhoon thought. However, she was allowing Minhyuk to call her noona?! She was being called noona?! Lee Seokhoon rubbed his aching temples.

"I'm going to go back and get some more training."

"Yeah."

Minhyuk rushed back to the training grounds while Lee Seokhoon left not long after. Lee Seokhoon could only sigh deeply after seeing that Minhyuk was already nowhere in sight.

Minhyuk repeatedly swung his wooden sword again the moment he got back to the training grounds. Today was the final day of the one-week deadline.

Slash!

"Today, I am finally!"

Slash!

“Going to eat!”

Slash!

“Army stew!” Minhyuk shouted excitedly as he continued to swing his sword.

Slash!

Craaaaack!

[You have gained 1 SP.]

[You can also invest your SP on stats that can't be raised with Bonus Points.]

Minhyuk broke another wooden puppet. Then, just like usual, he invested his SP into his DEX. Over the course of his training, he was able to increase his DEX to almost 360, making him feel very satisfied.

[One week has passed since you starting training with Ellie's Swordsmanship.]

[You have achieved more than 100% of the invisible training progress.]

[You have perfectly mastered Ellie's Swordsmanship.]

[The strength and power of Ellie's Swordsmanship changes depending on the training progress that you have achieved.]

[You have acquired Ellie's Swordsmanship.]

‘Phew.’

It seemed like it was a special reward. Right? It was only possible for Minhyuk to receive a special reward since he had exceeded the set limit for the training. Then, Minhyuk checked Ellie's Swordsmanship right away.

(Ellie's Swordsmanship)

Active Skill

Rank: Unique

Level: 1

Proficiency: 0%

Mana Required: Depends on the chapter that will be used.

Cooldown: Depends on the chapter that will be used.

Effects:

?1st Chapter: Sword of Fury

?2nd Chapter: Rampant Sword

?3rd Chapter: Ellie's Swordsmanship

?4th Chapter: Step

The form and the movements of the skill were quite similar to Bardy Swordsmanship so he checked each chapter to see if there were obvious differences.

(Sword of Fury)

Active Skill

Type of Swordsmanship: Ellie's Swordsmanship

Mana Required: 180

Cooldown: 2 minutes

Effects:

?Additional 50% attack power for strong lunges and stabs.

?Additional 30% attack power on successful strike on vital points.

(Rampant Sword)

Active Skill

Type of Swordsmanship: Ellie's Swordsmanship

Mana Required: 300

Cooldown: 2 minutes

Effects:A flurry of rampant swords will be created with a 30% additional attack power for five seconds.

(Ellie's Swordsmanship)

Active Skill

Type of Swordsmanship: Ellie's Swordsmanship

Mana Required: 400

Cooldown: 30 minutes

Effects:

?All stats will increase by 15% and skill casting time will be reduced for five minutes.

?Evasion Rate +30%.

?Critical Hit Rate +30%.

(Step)

Passive Skill

Type of Swordsmanship: Ellie's Swordsmanship

Mana Required: None

Cooldown: 3 seconds

Effects: Can quickly move one meter in an instant allowing you to quickly narrow or widen the distance between you and your opponent.

“Oh!” Minhyuk exclaimed. He thought that the skill was very good. First off, the skill was leagues above Bardy Swordsmanship, even Minhyuk could see how superior the skill was compared to what he had learned before. Furthermore, what was even more satisfying was the fact that Ellie’s Swordsmanship could level up. This meant that the skill would be able to become stronger in the future. However, even though the skills were good, there was one problem that caught Minhyuk’s attention.

‘The MP consumption...’

The MP consumption was higher than what he had expected. Compared to Bardy Swordsmanship, the stronger and more powerful Ellie’s Swordsmanship could consume around 7~10 times more MP. In any case, it was fine...

‘I have that!’ Minhyuk thought. Earlier, he had flung it in his inventory and not cared about it since it was not delicious, but he still had it. It was none other than the Minotaurus’ Bone Necklace. The item would instantly give him an additional 1000 MP as soon as he equipped it. That was not all; once the item was equipped, his MP recovery rate would double and would prove to be a great assist whenever he used Ellie’s Swordsmanship.

Just then, the door opened and Ellie came in. She said, “I see that you have learned the skill.”

“Yes, I learned everything! Hoho, so please give me the ingredients now. This is the list,” Minhyuk said, handing over the list of ingredients that he had made in advance to Ellie. It seemed like he had been waiting for this moment for a long time.

Ellie handed the list over to a servant that was waiting outside and came back to check on Minhyuk’s training progress. She said, “I want to see it once.”

“Yes!” Minhyuk exclaimed as he approached a blue wooden puppet to show off his new skills. First, the Sword of Fury. His sword started to flash red.

[Sword of Fury.]

[There will be an additional 50% for strong lunges and stabs, if a vital strike is successful, 80% additional attack power will be applied.]

There were no vital points that were shown, unlike when he used ‘Vital Strike’ from Bardy Swordsmanship. However, Minhyuk still thought that this skill was infinitely better. If the player found a vital point on their own, or accidentally hit a vital point, the player would receive an additional 30% attack power that was added on top of the original 50% increase whenever the skill was used. This increase was something that could not be ignored. Minhyuk stabbed the wooden puppet resolutely. He remembered the area where he first struck the wooden puppet before, so it was a bit easier for him to strike right now. He stabbed the wooden puppet with all of his might.

Fwooooooosh!

The air felt like it was being ripped into two. The vibrations caused by the strike could even be felt in the entire training grounds. Ellie's eyes were shining unusually bright. She thought, 'As expected...! It's beyond perfection!'

Then, Minhyuk's wooden sword met with the blue wooden puppet...

Craaaaack!

...and made it shatter.

Bang!

Plop, plop, plop—

The remnants of the wooden puppet fell all around Minhyuk. It might not be the same as Ellie where there were no scattered remnants of the puppet, but it was still obvious to any bystander that it was a powerful strike. That was not the end.

'Chapter 3, Ellie's Swordsmanship.'

[Ellie's Swordsmanship.]

[All stats will have a 15% increase for 5 minutes.]

[Your Evasion Rate has increased by 30%.]

[Your Critical Hit Rate has increased by 30%.]

The red aura surrounding Minhyuk's body started to flutter and dance. And...

[Rampant Sword.]

[A flurry of rampant swords with additional 30% attack power will be created for 5 seconds.]

...Minhyuk quickly jumped in the middle of the blue wooden puppets as he moved his sword to strike the wooden puppets around him.

Shwaaaack!

Shwaaaack!

Shwaaaack!

Minhyuk's sword was moving so fast that it was even leaving afterimages. It was extremely fast to the point that he could even make four strikes in one second!

Shwaaaack!

Shwaaaack!

After his skill's casting time finished...

Plop, plop, plop—

Tak, tak, tak—

...All of the wooden puppets surrounding him were torn and broken into pieces that fell on the ground one after the other. Minhyuk knew that the Rampant Sword was

very useful against a lot of enemies. What if the skill leveled up and his damage increased?

‘This strength is no joke, right?’ Minhyuk thought before testing out the remaining skill.

[Step.]

[You can instantly travel a distance of one meter allowing you to quickly narrow or widen your distance from your target.]

Dash!

Minhyuk just thought of moving backwards and he was already stepping back as if something was pulling him backwards. His movement speed was about three times faster than usual. It might look like it was just an ordinary skill, but its effect was definitely not.

‘What will happen if I immediately use it when I’m in danger?’

If Minhyuk used the skill right before a monster launched its attack, he would be able to immediately pull himself out of danger. The skill could also be used to quickly launch an attack or approach a monster.

“How is it, do you like it?”

“Yes, I like it!” Minhyuk gushed. Before learning Ellie’s Swordsmanship, he thought that it was just another skill that he needed to learn. However, once he mastered the skill, he thought that it was a skill that anyone would be satisfied with. When Minhyuk turned around, he saw Ellie holding a glass bottle filled with a transparent liquid. The liquid was shimmering faintly as it sloshed around the glass bottle. Ellie smiled softly and gave it to Minhyuk.

Team Leader Park Mingyu and the new employee Lee Minhwa were eating in the cafeteria, when the team leader of the development team, Lee Seokhoon, sat in front of them and sighed loudly. He said, “Sigh... I know now why Team Leader Park is having such a hard time with Player Minhyuk.”

“...What are you talking about?” Team Leader Park asked as he and Lee Minhwa looked at him in confusion. They have yet to know what happened since the Special Players Management Team did not look at the players everyday. The only thing that they knew was that he was gaining Ellie's favor and training his swordsmanship at an alarming rate. Team Leader Lee Seokhoon did not leave them hanging and explained to them what happened in the palace. Team Leader Park jumped to his feet and put his hands over his shoulders.

“Now... Now you understand why I’m having a hard time whenever I talk about that player, right?”

“...I understand. Ah, How are you going to handle him? No, he even calls the empress ‘noona’,” Team Leader Lee Seokhoon said, patting Team Leader Park’s hand. After they finished eating their meals, they stood up and went back together to the Special Players Management Team’s office.

“Let’s get a cup of coffee and talk a bit more about that player.”

They went inside the office with those words. When Lee Minhwa turned on her monitor screen, she was just in time to see Player Minhyuk, the player that they were just talking about. Then, her eyes suddenly opened wide in surprise. She shouted, “Team... Team Leader Park!”

“Why? Did Player Minhyuk do something amazing again?”

“Something big must have happened again~”

They were just saying it as a joke, but Lee Minhwa nodded her head seriously at their remarks and said, “Yes...”

“What?!”

“Gasp?!”

Team Leader Lee and Team Leader Park quickly turned their heads to look at the monitor. The notification that popped up left them gaping in surprise.

[The Sword Emperor Ellie gives Player Minhyuk the Empire’s Elixir as a present.]

“...!”

“...!”

It was the Empire’s Elixir!? Team Leader Lee and Team Leader Park’s eyes met over the monitor after confirming it over and over again.

Chapter 68: Army Stew Made with Elixir

“T, the elixir...?”

“Hahaha...”

Team Leader Park and Team Leader Lee both looked like they were in disbelief as they chuckled dispiritedly. The Empire’s Elixir was a reward that the empress could only give to one, and only one person alone! This was not how it was originally set to be acquired. The player should first receive the linked quest ‘Empire’s Elixir’ and calmly go through a step-by-step process before finally receiving the reward. Furthermore, they were expecting the Empire’s Elixir to be revealed at a much later time. Receiving the Empire’s Elixir meant that the empress had acknowledged the player, and would continue to treat them as if they were the closest of friends. In addition, the player who received this reward might be able to receive various quests in the future that were related to the Eivelis Empire.

“This is how the best medicine in the country should be revealed.”

Medicines were items that were created through the efforts of the operators. It was an extremely effective item that could be ingested by the players. Medicines could be in the form of a liquid like the Empire's Elixir. In addition, there were plenty of other medicines that could be found throughout the game like the thousand-year-old ginseng, ten thousand-year-old knotweed, mandragora, and ogre's energy herb. What was certain about this kind of item was the significant change that the player would undergo once it was ingested.

One of the reasons why medicine is considered to be much more valuable compared to other items was the fact that it could strengthen the stats of a character once it was ingested. It could also greatly increase the damage or the magical defense of the player. Unlike items that needed to be equipped for the increase in stats to take effect, ingesting a medicine had a long term effect on stats increase and strengthening.

Among all of those medicines, the Empire's Elixir was considered to be the most special.

Team Leader Park suddenly said, "He's going to drink the Empire's Elixir right away, right? He's not going to do something weird and crazy with it?"

The two of them stared intently on the screen, desperately hoping for this outcome.

[You can now receive the Empire's Elixir.]

[You can now take on Empire-related quests from the quest guide located in the palace.]

[You have gained 10 REP.]

Ellie was smiling at him gently. The Empire's Elixir was a special medicine that only the empress possessed and she wanted to give it to Minhyuk.

"I'll drink it well!" Minhyuk said, receiving it happily. He did not know anything about the elixir but there was something that he was sure of...

'It can be eaten!'

Ellie smiled gently at him without knowing what was going through his mind. She said, "You need to become stronger so you can eat more delicious food."

"You're absolutely right."

She wanted to help this foreigner named Minhyuk in the future just like how he helped her. Helped? To be honest, it was funny. He just made her laugh, approached her with friendliness, and made her surprised with how much effort he gave in every little task given to him. However, those simple acts were something that had touched her deeply.

And for Ellie who had no friends at all, he was like a safe haven. A person she could relax with and enjoy their company. He was the sole 'healing' for her, the empress who was bound by the responsibilities and mission of protecting the people of her empire. She said, "Go and check its information."

"Yes!" Minhyuk answered as he hurriedly read the contents of the information about the item.

(Empire's Elixir)

Material Grade: Medicine

Special Abilities: +180 to the stats that you need

Description: The best medicine that you could receive from Ellie, the empress of the Eivelis Empire. Once consumed, the Empire's Elixir can increase the stat that a player needs by +180. It's just some special water but it's much more delicious than any water.

It was a very unusual item. The Empire's Elixir could recognize a stat that a player needed and increase it by +180.

'Medicine?' Minhyuk tilted his head in thought. To be honest, this was his first time encountering any information related to medicine in the game. At that moment, Ruth came in with the ingredients that he requested. When Minhyuk caught sight of the ingredients, an idea suddenly came through in his mind. He thought, 'Wait...! C...can I use the elixir to make the broth of the army stew?'

He believed that it would taste more delicious. After all, it was obviously written that it was much more delicious than water. The description said that it was just some special water, but it was much more delicious than any water. It meant that it was water but it would taste better, right?! Minhyuk was wondering if it was possible as he quickly took the glass of Empire's Elixir in his arms.

"Are you not going to drink it right away?"

"I'll drink it later when I get thirsty."

"I see. When will you depart?"

"I'm going to take a day off today and leave tomorrow."

"I see. Then I'll give you one room for today, hippo. And Minhyuk..."

Minhyuk stopped in his tracks when she grabbed his hands and stroked it gently. He thought, 'What's wrong with this noona?'

Minhyuk was both surprised and taken aback at her actions. Why did she stop him? He needed to go and eat his army stew! But what Ellie did next completely surprised Minhyuk. She slowly bowed down and gently laid a kiss on the back of his hand. At that moment...

[Ellie's Kiss.]

[A mark of friendship has been engraved.]

[You can now ask for Ellie's help any where and any time you need. Can only be used once.]

"Whenever you need my help, just rub this mark on the back of your hand and I'll come to your aid immediately," Ellie said. The mark engraved on the back of Minhyuk's hand was in the figure of a phoenix. After finishing this matter, Ellie quickly moved away to attend to her busy schedule. On the other hand, Minhyuk took the

big box filled with ingredients and happily skipped and hummed behind Ruth, who guided him to the room prepared for him.

Minhyuk looked at all the ingredients that he was preparing happily. He quickly prepared the sliced spam and long ham, the dumplings filled with ground pork, as well as the rich, savory cheese. He also prepared the soft and chewy rice cake and the flavorful, ripe kimchi and pickled onions. He then made a simple spicy sauce by mixing the appropriate amount of red chili paste and red pepper powder together. After finishing his preparations, he placed all of his ingredients in a wide pot specially made for stew. He smiled happily as he filled the pot well.

Then, he opened a disposable container pack that said ‘Thick Beef Bone Soup’. If he made army stew with thick beef bone soup as the stock, the stew would have a much deeper, tastier flavor. He poured the beef bone soup in a separate bowl.

‘Now, the long awaited ingredient! The Empire’s Elixir that’s much more delicious than any water!’

Minhyuk pulled the stopper off of the glass bottle.

Pop!

“Kyaa, what a good sound!” Minhyuk said, smiling happily at the sound. Then, he poured the wonderful Empire’s Elixir over the beef bone soup and mixed it well. After he mixed his soup stock well, he added the sauce from earlier and poured it in the middle of the pot. Finally, he turned the heat on and let the stew boil. Once the soup started to boil, Minhyuk picked his spoon up to take a sip of the soup.

“Fwoo! Fwoo!” Minhyuk blew on his spoon to cool down the soup slightly, before taking a big sip out of the soup. Then, he said, “As expected, it still tastes a bit bland.”

Army stew was a dish that tasted better and well-seasoned the longer it was boiled. It was usually a dish that was made even better with the addition of ramyeon noodles. People usually added the noodles once the soup started to boil. So, Minhyuk opened the ramyeon noodles and placed them in the pot. Then, he pressed the noodles with his ladle to soak it in the soup, little by little.

Once the noodles were cooked, he stirred it with his chopsticks and picked up a mouthful. Ramyeon noodles were the best choice that should be eaten first the moment the stew was boiled. Steam rose as he lifted some ramyeon noodles out of the pot and placed it on a bowl. Then, he scooped out some of the red soup and ham, adding it together with his noodles. Minhyuk clamped the noodles with his chopsticks, then...

“Sluuuuuuuuuurp!”

The noodles were soft and chewy, evidence of being cooked properly inside the army stew. The savory and chewy noodles tasted good. Then, Minhyuk took another bite of noodles, this time with kimchi and ham.

“Sluuuuuuuuuurp!”

The combination of the springy ham, well-cooked kimchi, and chewy noodles created a fantastic combination. Minhyuk said, “Ah, it’s perfect!”

After letting out such an exclamation, he lowered the fire before scooping up some rice into his bowl. He took a big bite of the rice followed by a spoonful of soup together with some stretchy cheese. The savory flavor of the cheese and the spicy ham-flavored soup made him smile as soon as he took a big bite.

“Kyaha!”

Then, Minhyuk turned his attention towards the thick egg roll that he prepared earlier before he started making his army stew. This egg roll was of course made from the eggs of the Chicken that Lays Golden Egg. He picked a thick piece of the egg roll and dipped it in the ketchup. The sweet and mild flavor of the ketchup, along with the soft and light texture of the eggs, spread in Minhyuk’s mouth.

“Excellent, fantastic!”

That was how Minhyuk’s mukbang continued.

Ellie looked extremely busy as she moved from one place to another. She said, “I’ll meet with Marquis Bratine later to talk about the Northern Territories. Ruth, take good care of that boy Minhyuk on my behalf.”

“I understand,” Ruth said. Not long after, Ellie moved towards the warp zone and disappeared, leaving Ruth heaving a big sigh.

‘I never thought that she would give him the Empire’s Elixir..?’Ruth thought. There was only one Empire’s Elixir in the entirety of the empire, however it was a proof of the prosperity of the Eivelis Empire. Ruth was quite bothered by the fact that Ellie willingly gave it to Minhyuk. However, he still had to accept her decision.

‘Because it’s what Her Majesty decided to do.’

His steps brought him towards the room where Minhyuk was staying. He thought, ‘Since he stayed in the training grounds for a week, he should definitely be sleeping, right? I should go in quietly just in case.’

Ruth opened the door silently. And the moment he entered...

“...?”

Chew?—

...his eyes widened in surprise. He was quite sure that Minhyuk would be sleeping, but he saw him almost done eating army stew and egg rolls. Ruth’s eyes widened further when he saw the empty bottle of the Empire’s Elixir rolling next to the almost empty pot of army stew. He shouted, “My goodness! Who would make army stew using the Empire’s Elixir?!”

The shock and surprise Ruth felt almost left him senseless.

‘How can there be such a crazy guy?!’

“Ellie-noona gave it to me so I can eat it anyway I want!”

“No, it just doesn’t make any sense! Don’t you know that you can’t use medicine for cooking?!”

“...Is that so? No, why did you come inside without knocking, and you’re even scolding me? I’m going to tell this to Ellie-noona!”

Ruth’s demeanor quickly changed when he heard Minhyuk’s threat. He stammered nervously, “N... no. What I wanted to ask was... did you enjoy it? Hehe. W...was it delicious? A...army stew made from the Empire’s Elixir?”

“It’s extremely delicious! Kghhk!”

‘This army stew-crazy punk!?’ Ruth thought.

However, Minhyuk looked at him curiously. He said, “Do you mind if I ask you about something?”

“What is it?”

Minhyuk furtively looked at his lower half and asked, “...Did it hurt a lot?”

“Ahem!” Ruth coughed loudly. Then he said, “The times have changed. They already use chemicals to numb the pain these days. No... Why am I even explaining this to you?”

Minhyuk stood up and approached him, his eyes watery and filled with pity. He said, “...Was it difficult?”

His expression and voice made Ruth suddenly feel sad. He bowed his head as if to hide his own eyes that were threatening to water. He even looked like he was about to wipe his tears away with his sleeves!

“Yes...”

Minhyuk patted him on the back as if he was telling him ‘Cheer up!’ in his own way. Then he whispered quietly, “Were you standing or sitting down when it happened?”

“If they’re in a good mood then you can sit down. When they’re in a bad mood, then you remain standing up.”

“I see,” Minhyuk said. The mystery that had been bothering Minhyuk since earlier was finally resolved.

Chapter 69: Army Stew Made with Elixir

Ruth went out of the room after a brief conversation between him and Minhyuk. Meanwhile, Minhyuk ate the last piece of egg roll as he recalled their conversation. He asked, “Are we not supposed to use the medicine in cooking?”

Minhyuk was completely unaware of the importance of the item so Ruth had explained to him why elixirs and medicines should not be cooked. Before Ruth left, he said, 'Medicines and elixirs are a kind of special food that can only be eaten by one person alone. These medicines and elixirs will lose their effectiveness once cooked, it's a sort of preventive measure, stopping anyone from dividing and sharing the essence of the medicine.'

Of course, it would not change the fact that Minhyuk would still use it to cook even if he knew the importance. Then, the notifications rang.

[You have eaten an Army Stew made with the Empire's Elixir.]

[Food God's Greatness.]

[You have ignored the medicine penalty. However, it still remains ineffective for other people.]

[A medicinal dish. You have obtained additional stats.]

[You have gained +180 DEX and +20 Will.]

"Oh...!" Minhyuk shouted in admiration. Cooking both a delicious and medicinal dish gave Minhyuk an additional +20 in his stats thanks to the effects of The Food God's Greatness. But the notifications did not end there.

[You have accumulated a total of 400 DEX. All skills and abilities related to DEX will improve by 10%.]

[You have accumulated a total of 500 DEX. All skills and abilities related to DEX will improve by 10%.]

[You have accumulated a total of 50 Will. You have acquired the passive skill: Will.]

"Oh!" Minhyuk exclaimed in delight. All of his skills and abilities related to DEX had improved by 10% twice, for a total of 20%. Minhyuk was very happy with this, knowing that his farming skill would also be affected by this improvement.

Minhyuk might not be aware, but he had already received a lot of special benefits compared to other players. Minhyuk was given the special treatment that would allow him to learn and acquire skills related to DEX because Len was a master-ranked chef after working and doing various labor-intensive jobs related to DEX. It was basically because he studied under Len that he was able to learn skills related to DEX. Now, those skills would improve by 20%.

Minhyuk quickly checked his Intermediate Farming skill. The other day, he invested one of his SPs that he had received through Ellie in this skill. The only reason why he did not invest his SPs on Food God's Cooking was because he could not use the general SPs to increase the skill's level, so he invested it in his farming skill. Because of that, his Novice Farming skill had now evolved and became Intermediate Farming.

(Intermediate Farming)

Passive Skill

Level: 1

Effects:

?You will be 60(+12)% faster whenever you gather and dig for materials and ingredients.

?You have a 30(+6)% chance of obtaining better materials and ingredients.

?You have a 2(+0.4)% chance of obtaining special materials.

?You can grow a variety of things just by planting seeds.

“Yeah!” Minhyuk exclaimed happily. Now, he was sure that his skills related to DEX had improved by 20%. Although he wasn’t sure about the benefits, he still felt happy looking at the results. Then, Minhyuk looked at the new skill that he acquired, Will. This was the first time that Minhyuk had learned that a stat could become a skill so he immediately checked its information.

(Will)

Passive Skill

Level: 1

Level Up Requirements: Increase Will by 50 points.

Effects:

?Your fatigue and exhausted mind will clear up whenever you exert your utmost effort, passion, determination and indomitable will. All skills and abilities related to DEX will have a 10-30% increase for one hour.

?Increases Will Acquisition Rate.

The stat Will was literally changed into a skill. The only difference was that the vague effects and conditions for triggering would now be definite. With the Will stat turned into a skill, Minhyuk would definitely be able to activate Will, as long as he tried hard and focused on his tasks. Minhyuk closed the skills window with a satisfied smile on his face. After he finished looking through all of his skills, he crawled onto the bed and hid under the covers. He said, “Knew it! The best thing to do after eating is lying down in bed, not cleaning up!”

I ate a delicious army stew and received a variety of things during my stay in the imperial palace!

Minhyuk continued to lie in bed as he opened?Athenae’s official website. What he searched this time was...

‘Food found at sea.’

Just like usual, countless related search words and articles popped up.

[Guys, I heard the sound of a Kraken yesterday. Here’s the proof.]

“Oh?” Minhyuk said. The Kraken was a Level 300 boss monster and was considered to be a fairly powerful opponent. However, it was convenient to also think of it as a giant octopus. Drool dripped down Minhyuk’s chin the moment he thought of octopus.

“Slurp!” Minhyuk sucked back the drool and wiped the saliva off of his chin as he clicked on the article. Unfortunately, it turned out that the thing that the player called his proof was not a Kraken, but a distant relative of one, a small webfoot octopus.

“Oh, webfoot octopus sounds delicious. Wow, I can’t help but think of stir-fried webfoot octopus!” Minhyuk said. However, even though it sounded delicious for Minhyuk, the comments under the article were all negative.

[SeafoodMarketUncle: Is your fishing level only at Level 1? Why learn fishing if it’s only at that level? That’s a waste of your skill slot.

SoccerKingKangTaegong: I agree. Fishing is one of the trashiest skills in the production class that you can learn. Why would you even learn that?

ActionBall: Guys, wouldn’t the quality of the materials and ingredients that you will be able to catch increase if your fishing level increases? They say that it would be good to sell it to the chefs.

SoccerKingKangTaegong: I used to really like fishing so I learned fishing here and even got the class ‘Fishing King Kang Taegong’ but it’s really different here. In real life, you can catch a lot of fish, right? But here, we can’t even catch 20% of what we can in real life... And the ingredient grade? You need to catch at least 20 materials before even getting one C grade ingredient. Fishing is a bottomless pit, it’s really bad.]

A lot of negative comments about fishing popped up, but Minhyuk only had eyes for the ingredients that could be caught at sea. It was not just the web-foot octopus, as long as one had the fishing skill, they could even catch blue crabs. Minhyuk was now sure that he would be able to catch a lot of seafood as long as he sailed at sea. So, despite the barrage of negative comments towards the skill, Minhyuk planned on acquiring the Fishing Skill. However, a post soon caught his eyes.

[You need to be at Level 200 to hunt in the lowest level hunting ground, Barmil Sea.]

“Gasp?!” Minhyuk gasped in shock at the sudden hurdle that appeared in front of him in his quest for seafood.

I can only go there if I’m at Level 200? What the hell does that mean?

Minhyuk quickly searched for more information until he finally found the reason why. The sea was filled with strong monsters and they were totally different from the monsters on land. Only high-leveled players who were well-versed in fighting at sea could enjoy fishing in these hunting grounds. In other words, Minhyuk was severely restricted by both his level and strength. Minhyuk was a bit disappointed that he could not get directly to the sea, but he still shook his head and thought positively. He thought, ‘I’m heading to the Barras Kingdom anyway.’

On his way to Prassel, the Emperor’s City, he had received a quest from Coachman Baran to meet with ‘Blacksmith Ron’, right? And according to Baran, Ron had special ingredients on his hands. Ingredients that were especially hard to come by. Minhyuk was curious about what ingredients they were, so he planned to visit him. On his way, he would also visit the Chef Tower to exchange his points. Minhyuk also knew that the kingdom has a lot of quests available for different production classes like quests for blacksmiths, quests for chefs and even quests for seamstresses. He was also able to confirm one fact when he searched through the official website...

‘There’s a lot of cooking quests available in the Barras Kingdom!’

...a lot of cooking ingredients seemed to be needed in the kingdom, so they would always issue plenty of quests to players. Things like asking them to hunt the monsters in the kingdom’s vicinity, helping them to replenish their ingredients, stuff like that. Of course, the ingredients were mostly ordinary and simple, but for Minhyuk, having a delicious meal was much more important compared to those worries.

“Great! I’ll have a good rest today and leave tomorrow!”

From what he heard, Barras Kingdom had a good relationship with Eivelis Empire. According to what Ruth said, he could take the warp gate to get to Barras Kingdom due to its close proximity to the empire. This was the special warp gate that was not open to ordinary players! However, Minhyuk was given special permission to use it. Not long after, Minhyuk fell sound asleep on the comfortable bed. A scene from ‘One Lucky Day ’ appeared in his dreams. It was the scene where Kim Cheom-Ji’s wife could not eat ox bone soup.

Minhyuk quietly murmured in his sleep, “Dirty old hag... You should just give me the ox bone soup... Nyam...”

Minhyuk was definitely doing bad things in his dreams.

Brony was laughing wildly. He said, “Keuhahahahaha! I really got one hell of a catch today!”

“Wow, isn’t that amazing? I didn’t expect that much from these low-leveled players and NPC merchants,” Elaine said, standing next to Brony.

They just finished killing off and looting the NPCs and players they came across on the top of the mountain. Even though they were only a small group, there was still a large difference between them and those novice merchants. In fact, they did not expect much profit from the low-level merchants since there was a limit to how much they could carry, but they gained a lot after seeing a lot of good things dropped from these novices.

“Come to think of it, that player from earlier had a good name. He was a novice, but how can he drop so much good stuff?”

“Hohoho. What does it matter? But, what was he saying earlier?”

“The being in my right hand will go berserk...? Or something like that.”

“Crazy bastard.”

“Yes, I think so too,” Brony said as he twirled his finger on the side of his head. Then, Brony continued to say, “It’s time to leave this place and go to Amenta.”

Brony and his colleagues were part of the Horden Guild, an infamous guild for their unscrupulous gameplay. The members of this guild would not hesitate to kill NPCs to loot them. They also would not hesitate to steal a dungeon or a field, as long as they got paid for it. Aside from looting

activities, they would also gladly accept requests that other large-scale guilds would not normally take.

After laughing wildly for quite some time, Brony's forehead suddenly crumpled in annoyance. He said, "Shit, that 'Right Hand' bastard looks strangely familiar."

"Yes?"

"I think I've seen him from somewhere before?" Brony said, fumbling through his memories. Then, he shouted, "Ah, he looks like that damn bastard!"

Elaine looked at him strangely after seeing him act like that.

'It was my dark history.'?Brony thought, not saying anything further about who, or what happened back then. However, he remembered the memories back then.

'Was it around middle school?'

Brony was no different from how he was back in middle school. He was the typical bully that threatened his schoolmates and robbed them of their pocket money. The event had happened as he tried to extort some money from someone.

'Are you Kang Minhyuk from Class 3? I heard that you suddenly went on a rampage and called us up to the rooftop.'

Brony remembered the president of their student council, Minhyuk. Minhyuk was a handsome boy with good grades and a nice personality. The typical A-lister that mothers loved. Hearing his challenge, around twenty people went up to the rooftop with Brony to intimidate him. However, something shocking happened...

'Was it around 15? I think he knocked out 15 people all by himself at that time.'

Brony thought that everything would be over as long as they managed to trample on him, so the very next day, they gathered in twos and threes, and attacked Minhyuk. This went on for three whole months. They would always stage an attack, but Minhyuk would always just counter and defeat them all by himself. That was when Brony realized the painful truth...

'That guy said, 'Touch me and I will XXX you over so beg your friends to stop...'

Brony turned dizzy when he recalled that painful memory. He thought,?'That damn bastard. He was really a freak.'

After that incident, the tables had finally turned. Since then, the one that was being robbed of their pocket money was them, and it was Minhyuk that did the extortion. Other people did not know what they went through and thought that it was just a funny anecdote. In fact, even Brony and his friends thought that Minhyuk was just like them, a typical bully. They thought that he was also trying to fill his stomach by extorting money, but after quite some time they found out...

'From what I heard, he used the money he extorted from us to support starving children, I think?'

Chapter 70: Cha Chapagetti~

Brony thought that Minhyuk was really weird. Normal kids their age back then would opt to buy branded padded jackets, or hang out with their friends the moment they got their hands on extra money. However, that punk had actually used the money he extorted to help support the starving and malnourished children. The notion was absolutely ridiculous.

Knowing that, Brony thought that he could not lose any more money like that, so he went and talked to his father, who was an owner of a small, but very profitable business. After the phone call with Minhyuk's father, Brony's father had stopped for a moment to contemplate, before telling him, 'I'm not going to ask you guys about the money, but please don't do it in the future anymore. And please don't create any more trouble for that boy.'

Brony was confused when that happened. His father was very arrogant and prideful. He was a man that hated to lose. Yet, he had turned pale the moment he spoke on the phone. So, Brony asked him, 'What the hell does that guy's dad do?'

'He doesn't want to tell you that. I'm asking you once again, please don't get into trouble with him. I won't be able to handle the consequences if anything goes wrong,' his father had said.

Back then, his father looked so pressured that he even scolded Brony for getting into trouble with Minhyuk in the first place. Four months after that incident, he transferred schools and no longer heard any news about that guy ever since .

'What the hell does that guy's dad do? It's been a long time so I should go and ask Dad.'

When Brony finished recalling his dark history, a whisper suddenly arrived.

[Kald: This is Horden Guild's Brony, right?]

Brony's eyes narrowed to a slit. He said Brony? Just Brony?!

[Brony: Yepyep. That's right. Who the X are you, you bastard?]

[Kald: I'm Ares Guild's Kald.]

"...?"

Brony flinched when he read the whisper. Ares Guild? It was one of the top four guilds in the country. For some reason, he felt like he had heard the name Kald before, so he tried to recall when he heard all the while mumbling to himself, "Kald, who's Kald again?"

"Kald? Are you talking about the Kald that ranks second on the Blacksmith Rankings?"

"...Gasp?!"

The members of the Horden Guild were around Level 100 and the guildmaster, Brony, was at Level 200. Of course, due to the nature of the production class, the player named Kald would definitely exert a lower level of power than them. However, that very same person was known by another name... Godly Hands. From what they heard, any artifact that passed by his hands would turn out to become rare, or unique-ranked items. Not too long ago, he became the third person to produce an

epic artifact in the country. He was a man notorious for not showing his face to the public. The fact that he sent a whisper to Brony meant that he had gone through the trouble of finding out the code of the players with the same name as him. In other words, he wanted to request a commission.

[Brony: Ah, is that so? I'm sorry for my rudeness. Excuse me, but why are you looking for me, Kald...?]

[Kald: I heard that you accept commissions and requests that's a bit difficult for others to do.]

[Brony: Yes, that's correct.]

Brony's eyes narrowed sharply. The man sitting at the second place on the Blacksmith Rankings, who had a firm, high position in one of the four top ranking guilds in the country, had sent a whisper to him. Brony quickly sent him another whisper.

[Brony: Is the commission strictly confidential?]

[Kald: You're quick on the uptake. I hope that no information about my guild will be released and that no one else will know that I requested this.]

A dirty job that he needed to hide even from his guild! Brony had a hunch that it had something to do with killing players or NPCs.

[Brony: I see. How much will you pay me?]

[Kald: A million gold.]

"...!"

Brony's eyes widened in shock. It seemed like the commission was much more serious than what he thought. Then, another whisper came from Kald...

[Kald: It's in Barras Kingdom.]

Harmel was a woman that manned the Points Exchange counter at the Chef Tower. Just like any other day, plenty of players were lined up behind the counter. And then...

"Ack?! That's all I can get for 2,000 points?!"

"Yes, we're sorry, gullible cust... No! Dear customer! We can't do anything about it since it's the rules."

"Cheapskates, you guys are cheapskates!"

Although the customers were always right, there was nothing they could do. What they could exchange with their points was usually only from a small selection. The operators had revealed earlier that the larger the points that the players choose to exchange, the better the range of selections that they could choose from. However, points would expire every six months. In other words, it was impossible for the players to collect points for a year or two before exchanging them at the counter.

Anyone who could exchange a huge amount of points meant that the player either specially earned points, or they made huge achievements. After all, they would be able to receive plenty of points if

they brought huge benefits for the citizens and the country. One player after another exchanged their points at the exchange counter. Then, another player came in to exchange their points.

‘What’s with this person?’ Harmel thought, brows furrowing slightly. However, she was manning the counter so she quickly straightened her expression out. Harmel saw the person holding something in his hands. It was none other than half a watermelon. Looking closely, she saw that the watermelon was filled with fruit punch made with fruit cocktails, sparkling cider, and white milk.

The man was holding a fork tightly, as he munched on the sliced watermelons and fruits in his fruit punch. He came up to the counter and said, “Hello!”

“Yes~ Please present your point coin.”

“Point coin?”

“Yes. This must be your first time in the tower,” Harmel said. Players who came here for the first time were usually unaware of point coins.

“Your point coin will appear if you reach your hand out and say ‘Point Coin’. We will be able to measure and count your points with that coin.”

“Aah. Yes. Point coin. Ooooooh! It’s real!” The man exclaimed as he handed his coin over to Harmel.

Then, Harmel squeezed the point coin and tried to concentrate hard. She would be able to check the amount of points the player had, if she concentrated hard and injected her mana into the point coin.

“Crunch, crunch, crunch!”

However, the sound coming in front of Harmel made it hard for her to concentrate. Harmel opened her eyes to see that the man was happily munching on the red watermelon.

‘I, it looks delicious.’

It was difficult to find watermelon these days since it was already winter. Weren’t watermelon fruits that were sweet and juicy? It was a fruit that had a crispy texture with sweet juices bursting in every bite. The man was even eating plenty of other fruits with his fork. Then, the man lifted his watermelon and drank the sweet mixture of cider and milk.

Gulp, gulp, gulp—

“Keuhaaa!”

“I, it looks delicious, dear customer!”

“Yes. It’s really, really delicious!”

“Don’t you think that I look a bit tired? You see, I’m working hard on a golden Saturday. Don’t you think I deserve a bite of watermelon...”

“Yes? But, if a beautiful woman like you eats watermelon, then it will get stuck in your teeth, right? Then, are you going to eat it with just your tongue? But, we want to only see the beauty and elegance of the woman named Harmel. Would that include your cute, fleshy tongue? Huhu...”

“Oh, oh my...” Harmel chuckled shyly as she placed a strand of hair behind her ears.

Then the man saw the candy placed on the desk and asked her, “Ooooh. Can I eat some of this?”

“Yes. It’s free so you can eat as much as you like.”

“...You’re not going to regret it, right? I can really eat as much as I like?”

Harmel wondered how much this man could eat? One? Two? So, she said playfully, “Even if you eat enough to pull out a pillar out of the candy factory, the Chef Tower will not say anything~”

“Ooooooh. Thanks.” The man said, opening a candy and placing it in his mouth.

“Crunch, crunch!”

Harmel tried to concentrate again, but failed to do so. So, she said, “...That, I’m sorry. Can you please let me concentrate? It’s a bit difficult to measure the points if there are distractions.”

“Yes, I’ll be quiet.” The man said, trying his hardest to remain silent. However, Harmel could still hear the man peeling candies one after the other. It was difficult for her to concentrate at all, so she opened her eyes only to see...

Tumble!

“Aaaaaaaaah!”

...almost 20 candies pouring into the man’s mouth.

“Do you think candies are like popcorn... I’m going to check your points inside!”

Harmel said, turning around and quickly going inside to finish measuring the man’s points.

[The Point Coin is being measured.]

[100... 235... 385...]

Harmel measured the points and thought,?‘You can’t get watermelon anywhere right now. Wow, fruit punch really looks delicious. Why did he eat it so deliciously?’

[1,245... 2,146...]

“Oh, he collected more than what I thought?” Harmel said. It was quite a large amount of points collected for a first-timer in the tower. However, not long after, Harmel’s eyes started to grow wider and wider in shock.

[5,211... 6,145... 8,131...]

“Gasp?!” Harmel gasped in surprise. Then, the figures came out completely.

[There are 15,200 points.]

“Impossible!” She shouted in shock. A player exchanging 15,200 points in the tower was unprecedented! When she came out after measuring his points, she saw him holding another bag of candy which he asked another employee to refill. The man said, “This candy is so delicious!”

‘This person... is strange...’

Team Leader Park and Lee Minhwa were both looking at the monitors with solemn expressions on their faces.

“15,000 points...”

“Although it’s only coincidental, the points are still somewhat similar.”

The monitor that the two of them were looking at was showing Player Minhyuk.

“The points match the price for the hidden piece, right?”

“That hidden piece is not easy to get. It’s basically impossible to achieve. After all, it’s almost impossible for a player to get 15,000 points before coming to the Chef Tower.”

In fact, it was also rare for a player to accumulate 15,000 points even in the Combat Tower.

“No, but we still don’t know how it will turn out yet,” Lee Minhwa said, knowing why Team Leader Park denied it just now.

‘It’s really a loss for someone to achieve a hidden piece just like that.’

The Chef Tower was hiding a hidden piece that could only be achieved if someone used 15,000 points to buy insignificant things in the tower’s point exchange. In fact, there were not a lot of people who would gamble with just the explanation written in the items. After all, 15,000 points was a huge amount of wealth. However, Lee Minhwa thought differently. She thought, ‘That player likes to eat delicious food the most...’

Lee Minhwa watched Minhyuk as he poured a bag’s worth of candies in his mouth.

Gordon, the deputy master of the Chef Tower, hurried to go somewhere. According to Harmel from the first floor, a player with 15,000 points had appeared in the tower. From what Gordon recalled, the person that had exchanged the most points in the tower was Twilight Chef Black. He had accumulated 20,000 points. However, that was accumulated. The highest point that he exchanged in a single transaction was only 6,000 points. And right now, a person with almost thrice that amount came here?

‘Who in the world is it?’ Gordon thought as he kept on walking. He had instructed Harmel to bring the customer to their VIP room while he headed there. That was when Gordon met Harmel, who came out from the bathroom.

“That person?”

“He’s inside. H...he’s a candy monster. He has already eaten ten kilograms.”

“What are you saying? Miss Harmel, are you trying to joke with me now?”

“T...that’s not...”

“Which person would willingly eat ten kilograms of candy? Is it the time to joke around like that?!” Gordon huffed angrily. However, he quickly calmed himself down; there were other important matters to deal with. He calmed down and asked Harmel, “I was too agitated. Did he tell you what he’s going to exchange his points for?”

“We haven’t talked about that part yet.”

“Not yet? So what were you doing while he stayed in the VIP room? What the hell?”

Harmel felt small and intimidated when he saw the sharp look in Gordon’s eyes. She said, “I, I was getting a refill for the candies.”

“Again with the candy. Harmel, I didn’t see you as someone like this...?Phew... Let’s talk about that later.”

Before he could open the door, he heard Harmel say cautiously, “But... what I told you about the candy is true.”

Grin—

Gordon smirked. Who would even eat ten kilograms of candies? Was this woman trying to mess around with him? So, he said. “He ate ten kilograms of candies? Can a person really do that? What is he, an elephant? No, not even elephants can do that. Is he that herbivorous dinosaur? A triceratops? If what you said is true, then I’ll appoint you as the deputy tower master right now.”

Creaaaaaak—

He opened the door after mouthing off at Harmel. After he opened the door, Gordon stared blankly for a couple of moments, before gently closing it again. Then he went towards Harmel and whispered to her whilst pointing at the closed door, “There’s a triceratops inside...!”