

Gourmet 691

Chapter 691: The God of Death and the Hell Corps

[He is the benevolent king of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

“Kihyaaaaaaaack!”

“Kihyeeeeeeeeck!”

“Kihyiiiiiick!”

The hundreds of thousands of demonic beasts and Hell Corps shrieked as the light slowly expanded and enveloped the world.

Sizzleeee—

Sizzleeee—

The demonic beasts and the Hell Corps began to melt away.

Meanwhile, everyone fighting for the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, including their soldiers and guild members, started to get healed. The injuries that littered their bodies were recovering while their skill cooldowns had started to reset.

[When he first came here, he was just an ordinary man. However, he became a role model to many.]

The voice rang in the ears of everyone present on the battlefield as the light expanded even further. Was it Minhyuk’s God’s Voice? No, not at all.

[He built up and developed his holy power by killing plenty of evil beings.]

Diiiiiiiing—

.

Along with those words, the first chime of a bell rang.

[He embraced and took many under his wing, eventually becoming their king.]

Diiiiiiiing—

The bell chimed a second time.

[With the holy power that he has gathered, he received recognition from the Sacred Papal Sword and became its new owner.]

Diiiiiiiing—

The bell chimed a third time as a man, whose eyes were closed, walked out of the source of the blinding white light. There was a golden sword hanging on his waist with the word ‘Minhyuk’ engraved on the blade. The gold-lined, embroidered white papal robe on his body caused his white skin, sculpted features and dark hair to stand out even more, looking radiant.

[From the very beginning, up to this moment, and into the future, he will remain as the kind and benevolent man that he is.]

Diiiiiiiing—

The bell chimed a fourth time.

Minhyuk, who was wearing a papal robe, slowly opened his eyes. His eyes captured the sight of his people and his guild members, who had fallen into the pits of despair. A bitter yet soft smile appeared on his face as he looked at them. Then, a powerful and imposing notification rang in their ears.

[He is the one that holds divine power, the friend of all, the king, the legend, the God.]

[His name? Minhyuk. The ones that hold holy power, heed his call.]

Flash—

Flaaaaash—

Flaaaaaaash—

Then, at that moment, blinding lights burst out from all over the place. The lights were so bright that no one could even open their eyes from the shocking glare.

Evern Religion.

Ailen Religion.

Favu Religion.

Bratilla Religion.

Gorbandi Religion.

Luacha Religion.

Coin Religion.

Hundreds, then thousands, then millions of people, with their faces covered by the hood of their priestly robes which carried the pattern of all of the religions that existed in the world began to appear one after another.

There were knights carrying swords that emitted bright light, priests carrying their god's religion's doctrines close to their hearts, and even believers with their hands clasped together in prayer.

Just like that, tens of millions of people wearing white priestly robes carrying different patterns appeared all around Minhyuk.

[Share this glorious moment together.]

Diiiiiiiiing—

As the bell chimed a fifth time, all of the paladins, priests, popes, and believers turned to look at Minhyuk alone.

[Remember this glorious moment.]

Diiiiiiiiing—

As if the bell's sixth chime was a signal, everyone pulled the hood that covered their heads.

[The path that he will tread will soon become the path of legends.]

Diiiiiiiiing—

With the bell's seventh chime, Minhyuk held the Sacred Papal Sword with both hands.

"Your Majesty..."

"Your Majeeeeeeesty!"

"Your Majesty Minhyuuuuuuuk!!!"

The people cried out for their king. The king that had always been there for them since the very beginning! The King that had always fought for them since day one!

[Pray for him.]

At that moment, the tens of millions of popes, paladins, priests and believers prayed in their own unique ways. The paladins held their swords upright and placed them on their chests while the priests held their god's doctrine to their chests. Every single one of them was paying a silent tribute to the man in front of them. Then, a powerful burst of light appeared one after another from those that prayed.

[Your prayers have given courage to those that are feeling fear.]

Diiiiiiiiiiiing—

The bright light slowly spread out and covered the soldiers and executives of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

[All of your stats have increased by 23%!]

[When facing evil beings, your attack power will increase by 15%!]

[You will not be able to feel any kind of fear!]

Then, the bell chimed for the ninth time.

[Submit to him.]

Diiiiiiiiiiiing—

PD Kim Daeguk, with the little girl still tightly held in his embrace, looked up at Minhyuk.

There were tens of millions of people in white priestly robes looking at Minhyuk with firm determination in their eyes. Minhyuk stepped forward with the golden sword in both his hands.

"Destroy them."

Diiiiiiiiiiiing—

Along with those words, the bell chimed a tenth time. At the same time, holy power spread out from the hands of the tens of millions of priests, melting the demonic beasts in the area.

The paladins also marched forward, following right behind Minhyuk, who was walking at the vanguard.

[After three minutes of absolute obedience and subservience from the Pope's Journey, they will return to the place that they originally were in!]

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

Millions of paladins rushed out, wielding their swords and sending their bright and shining sword lights. All of the Hell Corps and demonic beasts that stood in their path collapsed.

Pope Kronad had temporarily sent them here.

'We don't have time.'

Countless notifications had rung in Minhyuk's ears as he ran forward with millions of paladins escorting him.

[The One that Wields the Papal Sword.]

[When facing evil, all of your attack will increase by 75% while all of your defense will increase by 50%.]

[You have ignored all abnormal status inflicted by evil beings!]

Immediately after that, Minhyuk's black hair slowly turned to white as a pure halo appeared behind him, leaving a bright aura on the path that he traversed.

[Pope's Dignity.]

[Effects will be applied based on the situation. You can change the color of your hair or even the shape of the artifact that you're wielding!]

It was obvious that the Pope's Dignity was a power created by the maker of this sword likely when he was drunk on anything and everything 'cool'. The skill would apply the appropriate effects to the situation, whether it was changing one's body parts or artifacts.

"Kieeeeeeeck!"

"Kyahaaaaaaack!"

The paladins opened up the path for him, allowing Minhyuk to run unimpeded with the holy sword in his hands.

"You bastard...!"

His destination was none other than Great Demon Verus.

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

Great Demon Verus unleashed a powerful force, completely engulfing Minhyuk. Unfortunately for him, Minhyuk currently had a very high defense against evil beings, and even received an additional 50% in defense thanks to the passive skill: The One that Wields the Papal Sword.

Pure white wings with beautiful and fine feathers slowly unfurled on Minhyuk's back as he continued to run forward. The wings on his back spread widely as he finally reached Great Demon Verus. This was also the effect that was deemed perfect for the situation, created by the Pope's Dignity.

Flap—

A strong flap of the wings on Minhyuk's back propelled him upward, bringing him face to face with Verus as a bright light appeared around the Sacred Papal Sword in his hands.

At first, Minhyuk felt utterly disappointed when he acquired the Sacred Papal Sword, because the Sacred Papal Sword did not have any 'Absolute Kill' skill. However, after Obren was freed from his seal, the sealed power of the Sacred Papal Sword was also lifted and Minhyuk acquired the skill: 'Pope's Sword'.

Artifact Skill

?The Pope's Sword responds to evil beings. It is a sword that destroys evil.

?The stronger the evil being is, the higher the damage. The higher the wickedness of the evil being is, the higher the damage.

The reason why Minhyuk considered this skill to be too overpowered was because there was no limit placed on the amount of damage that he could send towards evil beings.

Earlier, when Minhyuk was running towards Verus, numerous notifications rang in his ears.

[The Sacred Papal Sword has recognized the evil being!]

[Your damage will increase upon activation of Pope's Sword.]

[The Sacred Papal Sword...evil being!]

[Your damage...activation of Pope's Sword.]

[The Sacred Papal Sword...evil being!]

[Your damage...activation of Pope's Sword.]

In fact, Minhyuk thought that this battlefield was the perfect place for the Pope's Sword to display its strength to the greatest effect.

"Bastard!!! You're trying to destroy me once again!!!" Great Demon Verus bellowed, his hideous and terrifying yellow eyes glinting dangerously as he watched Minhyuk, whose white wings were unfurled behind his back, approach him.

Minhyuk swung his sword, which was engulfed with a bright light, down with all his might at Verus.

[Pope's Sword.]

[The Pope's Sword has recognized the evil being! You will be able to deal an additional 150,315% damage upon your enemy!!!]

Many who were watching Minhyuk with his white wings and sword engulfed in light, felt some sort of yearning for that power. Also, the scene looked utterly beautiful to the point that they could not take their eyes off of it.

Slaaaaaaaash—

Because of the extremely high damage inflicted by the Pope's Sword, Great Demon Verus' body was split in half, his body not given time to regenerate.

Fwiiiiiiiish—

Verus' body was engulfed by the light of Minhyuk's divine and holy sword, both halves slowly disappearing into nothingness.

Tap—

Minhyuk, with his white hair, landed softly on the ground. He turned to look at his people and his guild members.

At that moment, Genie remembered the urgent whisper that Minhyuk had sent earlier.

Genie did not know what Minhyuk intended to do but she still carried out his request and gathered all of the best players and members of Beyond the Heavens including Carr, Khan, Locke, Ares, Spear God Ben, Conir, God of Snakes Elizabeth and many more.

Meanwhile, the commentators gushed out in admiration as they watched Minhyuk turn to look at the Beyond the Heavens' citizens, troops and guild members.

[Beyond the Heavens' Food God Minhyuk has created another legend.]

[This video of him leading tens of millions of paladins, priests and believers will most definitely be considered as the best video of the year.]

But that was not the end yet.

Swoosh—

Minhyuk, whose white hair slowly bled out and returned to black, walked towards his guild members.

Flash—

Everyone watched in confusion as Minhyuk disappeared in a flash of light, together with the tens of millions of paladins, priests and believers. Although the Pope's Journey's Absolute Obedience and Subservience had not yet ended, they had already disappeared.

But then, at that moment, a beautiful voice spread across the earth.

[A long time ago, greedy humans tried to build a temple to fight the gods.]

[However, the temple that would be used to fight against the gods was not completed. It disappeared forever, only to remain in the annals of history.]

[Today, this temple has found its new owner.]

[Temple Evangel, the temple in the legends and the myths, answers the call of its new owner.]

Baaaaaaaang—

A pillar of light shot down and rapidly formed a temple.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

The walls of the temple were pure white and lined with diamonds. It was huge and magnificent. And inside that temple, the gigantic statue of Food God Minhyuk was erected. At the same time, beautiful flowers and lush trees, as well as well-placed vines grew around the temple, giving the entire place a more stylish feel. Finally, a door made of white wood appeared, completing Temple Evangel.

When the white doors opened, they saw Minhyuk sitting on the golden throne inside the temple. He was wearing a papal robe, and he looked at the executives and players of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom standing beyond the doors of the temple with a soft smile on his face.

[Temple Evangel has revealed its full appearance!]

[Minhyuk, the new owner of Temple Evangel, has triggered the temple's power!]

[Your character is being controlled by the system.]

Then, the chosen ones that Genie had gathered walked inside the temple one after the other. They lined up in front of Minhyuk and knelt down to show their courtesy.

Crackle—

Crackle—

Crackle—

White flames appeared and enveloped their bodies. To be exact, the white flames were creating white priestly robes that suited their bodies. On the back of those priestly robes was the symbol of the fork and knife, the mark that symbolized Food God Minhyuk.

Then, Minhyuk stood up and slowly descended with the Sacred Papal Sword in his hands. He stopped in front of the kneeling Genie and gently placed the sword on her left shoulder.

[The lord of the Temple Evangel and the god that owns the Sacred Papal Sword is bestowing upon you his love and affection.]

Then, he lightly tapped the sword on Genie's right shoulder and the top of her head.

[You are now the first knight acknowledged by the lord of Temple Evangel.]

[All of your skills and stats will change!]

The power of the legendary temple, Temple Evangel, was the power of 'buff'.

Chapter 692: The God of Death and the Hell Corps

Why did Pope Kronad want to construct the mythical temple Evangel to fight against the gods?

If one pondered about it deeply, they would find it strange. One would think that they would have opted to create a powerful weapon, or a strong skill if they wanted to fight against the gods.

However, Pope Kronad, the paladins, saintesses and priests that joined him in his cause all decided to create the Temple Evangel.

The answer to that question was very simple. The one that obtained Evangel would seize its powers. On top of that, the defense of Evangel was at a level that only few could break. That was not all. Evangel would be able to give its owner several special privileges that were very in line with its moniker, '*mythical temple*'.

However, even those reasons were not what spurred Pope Kronad and the rest of the people to awaken and create Temple Evangel.

‘The knight acknowledged by the owner of Evangel.’

According to different accounts regarding Evangel, once the temple was completed and found its rightful owner, the owner would be given the right to appoint ten people that would become Evangel’s Knights. According to those same records, the people appointed as knights of Evangel would gain a tremendous boost in power for a certain period of time.

Back then, not many humans had the power to cut down the gods. That was why Pope Kronad did his best to create Temple Evangel. He wanted to obtain the power that would allow others to cut down gods.

[You are now the first knight acknowledged by the lord of Temple Evangel.]

[All of your skills and stats will change!]

Genie’s hair and eye color turned white, matching perfectly with her fair and radiant skin. Then, a bright light burst out of her body.

[Your HP and MP have increased by 50%!]

[All of your stats have increased by 39%!]

[Your whip’s striking power has increased by 60%!]

[Your whip’s skill damage has increased by 50%!]

[You have received Evangel’s Blessings. Attack and defense will increase by 40% when facing evil beings.]

[The buff will last for one whole day.]

Pope Kronad had been disappointed back when they were almost finished with the construction of Temple Evangel. There was not much synergistic effect. Simply put, it failed to live up to their expectations.

However, Kronad thought, *‘Temple Evangel is a temple made to counter evil.’*

Evangel had the buff effect that would increase one’s attack and defense by 40% against evil beings. It would also grant various buff effects on the acknowledged knight. For evil beings, Evangel was practically torture.

“Kihyaaaaaack!”

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

It was very loud outside Evangel as the Hell Corps and the demonic beasts surrounded the temple that suddenly made its appearance.

Minhyuk nodded quietly at Genie, who was looking at him with a firm and determined expression on her face. He slowly approached the next knight as the bright halo of light continued to expand from Genie’s body.

And who was the second knight? It was none other than ‘Spear God Ben’.

Rex could not hide the shock on his face.

‘Evangel...? What in the world is Evangel?’

Of course, he could tell what Evangel was like through the notifications that resounded all over the world. However, no matter how hard he pondered over it, he could not figure out what kind of power it held. The only thing that he could see through the wide open doors of the temple was Minhyuk appointing his vassals as knights.

However, there was one thing that Rex was certain about. He had to destroy this temple called Evangel before it could exert its full power.

[Food God Minhyuk is holding a ceremony and appointing his vassals and guild members as knights inside the mythical temple, Evangel.]

[I don’t know why he is taking the time to appoint them as knights under the current situation. However, it seems like the Hell Corps and the demonic beasts cannot enter the temple even though its doors are wide open.]

[If they’re just aiming for a fancy and glorious performance, then they have already succeeded! The appearance of Evangel was so wonderful. I’m sure I will never forget this scene.]

The commentators and viewers could not help but feel anxious as they watched the Hell Corps and demonic beasts slowly start to surround Evangel. Then, Genie slowly walked out of the doors of Evangel.

Everyone watched as a bombardment of attack greeted her the moment she stepped out. They were fully aware that the Level 500 Hell Warriors were very difficult to deal with, even if a few of the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom teamed up.

In just a flash, Genie, who was wearing the white priestly robes with her long white hair fluttering behind her, disappeared from sight. When they saw her again, she had already cracked her whip out.

‘Stupid...! There are so many enemies yet you dared to come out alone!’ Rex thought, a wicked grin spreading widely.

Genie was one of the main pillars of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Once they killed her, their morale would drop drastically. The Hell’s Warriors immediately charged forward to kill her.

But then, her whip drew a beautiful arc as she struck the approaching Hell’s Warriors.

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

A single strike of her whip released blazing white flames that turned the Hell’s Warriors into ashes.

“...!”

“...!”

[...!]

[..!]

Just like that, Genie rushed toward the enemies.

Shwaaaaa—

Craaaack—

Fwooooooosh—

Her whip danced around, burning the Hell's Warriors into ashes while the numbers slowly diminished in front of her.

[Exploding Whip]

[There's a 23% chance of your whip exploding and incurring 2,600% additional damage to everything within a fifteen meter radius.]

Baaaaaaaang—

A huge explosion accompanied by blazing white flames swept the surrounding area. In just one minute, Genie was able to kill around 300 enemies.

'This is crazy...!'

That was not the end of the enemy's problems. Spear God Ben appeared right after Genie.

Spear God Ben was someone that had blocked countless enemies and even killed the strongest of their opponents. Because of that, Rex had decided to quickly exhaust him of his physical strength. He even forced the duration of his 'God Piercing Spear' to end so that he would be much weaker than before.

"Absolute Pinnacle Spear."

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

A rain of spears fell down right in front of Spear God Ben, whose long white hair fluttered behind him, and swept away the enemies around him.

Just like that, the appointed knights of Evangel walked out of the temple one after the other.

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

"Quick Draw."

A powerful force stretched out from Carr's sword and devoured all of the Hell Corps and demonic beasts in an area of fifty meter radius. In front of Carr's sword, the Level 550 beings from Hell also burned to ashes. Lesser Demon Elpis and God of Snakes Elizabeth stepped out right after Carr.

Each time a knight appeared, the tides of war were pushed even further in their favor. No matter how many ants there were, they would not be able to win against an elephant. This was what was happening right now.

The commentators and the viewers could not keep their mouth shut at the shocking spectacle that was unfolding in front of them.

[Crazy...]

[If you look at the camera stationed above the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, you will see them. They are the only source of light amidst the dark sea of Hell Corps and demonic beasts.]

[The ‘white flames’ effect that appears whenever they wield their weapons or use their magic has become the light that shines through the darkness.]

Temple Evangel slowly started to fade away after all ten of the knights had been appointed. Minhyuk hurriedly sent a whisper to Genie.

‘No matter how strong they could get from the buff that they received from Temple Evangel...’

Minhyuk could tell that Rex could bring in several more powerful beings here. That was why he knew that this was nothing but a stopgap. Just like that, Temple Evangel disappeared in a flash of light.

Meanwhile, Rex was listening to the notifications that were constantly ringing in his ears.

[The God of Death loathes you, who has lost more than half of his Hell Corps and demonic beasts.]

[If you lose in this war, all of your stats will receive a -50 penalty.]

[The God of Story is receiving harsh criticism and rebuke from the God of Death.]

[If you lose in this war, there’s a chance that you will lose your qualifications as the God of Story!]

“...”

Rex’s expression turned ugly at the notifications. However, a wide grin appeared in his face not long after.

‘The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom has received the admiration and praise of everyone because they were able to overcome the hardships and adversities that were thrown their way every time.’

That was right. They had been able to overcome those hardships and adversities. But that was it. Rex was very confident that he would gain victory here. After all, he was banking on the countless notifications that were now floating in front of him through his notification window.

As long as they had died, whether they were mythical beings or not, Rex could summon them with his contributions. That was why he was waiting. He was waiting for that last being to become available to him.

‘I will summon them all at once and wipe you all out.’

He was sure that he would be at the center of the spotlight once that happened. That thought alone brought a deep smile on Rex's face.

At the same time.

Minhyuk, who had returned to the Papal Wall, was fully aware of what was going on in Rex's head.

'He can summon the Corrupted God or the God of Snakes with the contributions that he had gathered. However, he's holding back on the summons.'

He knew that Rex intended to summon all of them at once so that he could wipe them all out in one go. In a way, that was the perfect plan. After all, there was a risk that they would be destroyed if he summoned them one by one.

However, right now, Minhyuk had a very powerful ally by his side.

"We can go back there now. And just like I promised you before, I will lend you my power once."

Pope Kronad was someone at Level 900. However, after summoning the Sacred Papal Sword and awakening Obren, his level had decreased to Level 750. Nevertheless, he was still powerful. So was the army behind him that was riding on the white pegasi's backs.

The army was composed of the strongest paladins, popes, saintesses, and priests. If Minhyuk was on the other end of their spears, he would have no other choice but to groan in despair at the sight of them.

'They look so freaking cool...'

It was quite a sight to see countless people wearing white priestly robes and faded full plate armor on their bodies while riding on the back of the legendary monster, pegasus.

[...Hey. Are you going without me?]

At that moment, a very welcome voice rang in Minhyuk's ears, bringing a smile to his face.

Crackle, crackle, crackle—

At the same time, the color red began to bleed in the sky, turning the surroundings dark. The scene shocked Kronad, the paladins and the priests. Then, an Evil God's Book covered with an eerie black light appeared in the sky above them. This was none other than the 'Evil God's Army', one of the Eight Evil God's Books.

Beings wearing black armor and riding on top of vicious ferocious war horses called 'Evil God's Ghostly Horse' marched out from within the book.

[Evil God's Knight. Level 631.]

[Evil God's Ghostly Horse. Level 540.]

'The Awakened Obren will only be able to exert the true power of the Evil God for one day.' This was the notification that he heard as he watched the countless number of Evil God's Army march out of the book in awe. Their number was roughly the same as the number of the paladins and priests.

Minhyuk stood in the middle, with Pope Kronad and the absolute beings wielding holy power standing on his right, while the Evil God's Army stood on his left. But that was not the end. The seasoning jar, covered with a bright light, appeared in front of him.

Bathump, bathump, bathump—

Minhyuk felt his heart thump wildly in his chest.

His dear friend Obren, who chose to sleep forever for his sake, and Minhyuk, who did his best to awaken him, finally met face to face.

Obren's figure, which he had only seen through the video, slowly walked out of the space that was created by the seasoning jar.

[Evil God Obren has awakened.]

[Evil God Obren has given you all of his trust.]

[Evil God Obren cares about you with all his being.]

[Evil God Obren loves and cherishes you with all of his heart.]

[Evil God Obren wants to live for you.]

Obren was a sad and pitiful young man in Minhyuk's memories. He was someone that laughed and cried alone, living a life of solitude while he continued to read his book. Then, he met the man named Kronad, who ended up betraying him and his trust. Obren was someone that had lived in the dark for a very long time.

Evil God Obren was looking at Minhyuk sadly.

[Evil God Obren has slaughtered billions of people!]

[With Evil God Obren by your side, you will receive countless criticism and hate from the other gods!]

[With Evil God Obren by your side, you will face countless hardships and obstacles!]

Obren looked at Minhyuk with a sad smile on his face. Then, he asked, "...Do I... Do I even deserve to stay by your side?"

Obren was described as the devil that had slaughtered billions. However, Minhyuk looked at him with a bright smile on his face and said, "Stay by my side forever, Obren."

Only after hearing those words did a bright and pure smile adorn Obren's face. The smile was the most beautiful and wonderful smile that Minhyuk had seen on him, a smile that he never saw once in that video.

Kronad, who watched the scene, shivered. *'The god of the new world and the Evil God of the past will create a new legend together...'*

Chapter 693: The God of Death and the Hell Corps

Flashes of light would occasionally appear amidst the dark sea of Hell Corps. With every slash of their blades and cast of their skills, the appointed knights of Evangel would burn hundreds of their enemies and turn them into ashes.

Evangel did not just grant them a simple buff effect. The appointed knights of Evangel also heard these notifications in their ears:

[The warm sacred power of the Temple Evangel flows in you.]

[All of your stats have increased by 11%!]

[The sacred and holy power melts away the fear settling in your bones and instills in you a great sense of bravery.]

[Your Holy Power has increased. When facing evil beings, all of your attack and defense will increase by 15%.]

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!”

“Aaaaaaaaaah!”

The soldiers of Beyond the Heavens shivered. Their king, Minhyuk, went on a Pope’s Journey and defeated countless evil beings for them. Even the executives of Beyond the Heavens that were appointed as Evangel’s Knights were driving out the evil and wicked beings away.

Meanwhile, the executives all felt like they were flying, with how powerful they were.

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

Carr brandished his sword once and he was able to cut down five Hell Corps soldiers in one go.

‘This is a completely ridiculous power.’

Any player would feel delight at the fact that they could kill an existence that they could not even think of hunting before. However, what they were experiencing was not just at that level.

All of their skills and stats had received a tremendous increase. On top of that, they had also received an increase in attack and defense when fighting against evil beings. It was more apt to say that the enemies would melt and disappear into nothingness with a single swing from Carr’s sword.

‘Right. At this rate, we might really be able to pull through this situation...!’

Carr even entertained the thought of wiping out the large army that was targeting them.

[God of Snakes’ Elizabeth’s First Child.]

[Marquess Leona has awakened to the world.]

“...?”

Minhyuk had fought against Elizabeth’s child, Marquess Leona, with the Masserati Guild in the Stars’ Path in the past. But now, she made another appearance.

[Snakes’ Fetters have been triggered!]

[All of your skills will be temporarily unavailable.]

[All of your parchments and potions will be temporarily unavailable.]

“...?”

Carr looked completely confused. He then turned to look at Elizabeth. Elizabeth was one of the Six Monster Gods. She had lost all of her memories and abandoned her past, becoming a strong ally and friend of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

For a moment, Carr wondered if she could nullify the condition that they were in. Just when the thought flashed in his head, Marquess Leona made eye contact with the soldiers of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

“Die.”

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

Thousands of Beyond the Heavens’ soldiers turned into stone.

‘What the hell is Elizabeth doing?’

Carr caught himself thinking, shocked by the thought in his head. Elizabeth was also currently fighting in the vanguard. She had also received many buff effects like them and had been demonstrating her power to free her allies and soldiers from the abnormal conditions that they were being subjected to.

Then...

[A sealed monster has awakened to the world!]

[Warning!]

[Danger!]

[Warning!]

[Danger!]

[God of Snakes’ Elizabeth has made her appearance!]

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

Elizabeth, who was existing with them right now, and the Elizabeth that they have killed in the past could be said to be two different beings. God of Snakes Elizabeth had been summoned two kilometers away from Carr.

[God of Snakes’ Curse.]

Green poison exploded from within Elizabeth’s body and enveloped the Beyond the Heavens’ troops. The soldiers began to melt and disappear the moment the poison touched their bodies.

“...”

In just an instant, more than 10,000 soldiers of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had perished. Carr could not help but gulp dryly. Unfortunately, their dilemma was not yet over.

[The Corrupted God has made her appearance!]

[The one that will be able to hunt the Corrupted God will be able to get rewards.]

[The Corrupted God is a being that not even the Great Demon could treat recklessly!]

[Warning!]

[Danger!]

[Warning!]

[Danger!]

[Warning!]

[Danger...!]

[A great existence that encompasses the entire world is descending!]

Twitch, twitch—

Everyone from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom felt fear run down their spines. Their legs were shaking so bad that it made it hard for them to stand properly.

The Corrupted God was laughing with that piranha-like set of teeth of hers glinting sharply, a stark contrast to her beautiful appearance.

“Heehee?”

Thousands of books rise in the sky above them. On the book were the names of countless soldiers of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Then, she struck the books with the axe in her hand.

Slash—

Red blood exploded from the books as the hearts of the Beyond the Heavens’ soldiers caved in and exploded.

“...Ah?”

Carr was just reveling in the feeling of immense strength earlier, but now, his thoughts turned in another direction.

‘What the hell is this...?’

Carr was the official number one player in Korea. He had also been appointed as Evangel’s Knight and had received a tremendous boost in his power. However, the enemies that appeared in front of him were far too strong.

Crack, crack, crack—

Thousands of Beyond the Heavens soldiers began to turn into stones once again.

“Please die.”

The poison from Leona and God of Snakes Elizabeth were easily killing their soldiers. The soldiers did not even have the time to scream as their bodies melted away, blood dripping down their orifices. There was also the Corrupted God cackling by herself while striking the books in her hand and using them to send lightning bolts and other attacks that devastated their forces.

“Ahihihihihihi! Die! Die! Die!”

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

“Euaaaaaaaack!”

“All of you, die.”

“Keheooooooooook!”

“Urrrrrk...!”

“Die.”

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

“Keheooooooooook!”

“...”

Everything in front of Carr was suddenly in slow motion. He, along with the other nine people that had grown stronger, tried to stop the onslaught of their attacks, but none of it worked.

“Ugh!” Spear God Ben groaned, a mouthful of blood dripping down his chin as he received a fatal injury from the Corrupted God.

“Keuaaaaaaack!” Khan screamed, his arm bending at an unusual angle as the Corrupted God bent the arm of the doll named ‘Khan’ in her hands.

“...”

As for Golden Mage Ali, he had received restrictions from God of Snakes Elizabeth and could no longer use his magic.

Carr’s grip on his sword loosened.

“Minhyuk...” he unconsciously called out Minhyuk’s name as he looked at the outer walls of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

‘Will we be able to endure until you come back?’

He could not help but doubt if they could stop them here.

“Retreat!!!”

“Retreat!!! Retreat!!! Get back!!!”

“Retreat at your fastest speed!!!”

The soldiers of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom rushed back inside the confines of the now-collapsed outer walls. Their casualties were at least 300,000. The kingdom was filled with the anguished cries of the people.

Genie gave an order to Park, “Park. Use the underground passage to take our people and the soldiers out of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom right this instant.”

“...!”

Park's pupils trembled fiercely as he looked at Genie and the executives of the kingdom that had gathered around her. There were only around 2,000 of them and they were mostly made out of players with Elpis, Gorfido, Connir, Aruvel and Spear God Ben in the mix.

Park could not bring himself to speak. The number of their people and soldiers alone had reached a million. Right now, she was telling them to abandon their kingdom.

"...I have received your orders."

In the end, Park conceded, his lips bleeding from how hard he bit them as he bowed down. Then, he hurriedly rushed to give his orders to the people and the soldiers.

"Your Majestyyyy!!!"

"Your Majesty Minhyuk!!!"

"Absolutely not! How can you tell us to abandon Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?!"

The cries of the people echoed in their ears. However, Genie still tried to show a smile to them. Then, she turned to the people that stood by her and asked, "Do you have any regrets?"

"None."

"There is none!!!"

There were plenty of powerful rankers among them. Many world rankers had knocked on the doors of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and joined their ranks, becoming the kingdom's pillar. None of them regretted their choice.

There was also Ben, Elpis, Gorfido and the other NPCs. Genie was aware that none of them would listen to her.

"Elizabeth."

"Yes."

"Create a shield."

"I understand, Unnie."

Elizabeth was also one of the appointed knights of Evangel. She might be a lot weaker than her original appearance, however, the buff effect that Evangel bestowed upon her allowed her to place a thick barrier all over their territory.

[God of Snakes' Shield.]

[A huge and invincible shield will be erected. This shield will not easily be broken by anyone.]

A bloody red barrier unfurled and enveloped the entire Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. The God of Snakes' Shield was supposed to be impenetrable to any and all existence. However, the problem was that the enemies could easily ignore the 'any and all existence' part.

Genie might look calm on the outside but she was just pretending. Everyone could see how badly her body was shaking. The small girl held her hand after seeing her release a shaky breath.

“Unnie,” Elizabeth called out, flashing her a bitter and helpless smile.

Genie could only respond with a small smile of her own. They were players so they would still be able to come back to life. However, these people here would not.

‘Minhyuk. We’ll try our best to save them somehow.’

Genie had always thought of ways to protect the reckless and stubborn NPCs of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. With Haze’s help, she had been able to find out about one artifact.

The artifact was the ‘Forced Summoner’s Room’s Ring’. It was an artifact that could force any vassal or NPC to enter the summoning room the moment they were placed in danger. Genie wanted to give this ring to Minhyuk. Only then would these NPCs live.

“Hihihihi...” The Corrupted God giggled as she summoned thousands of books in the sky above them.

Rex’s summoned God of Snakes Elizabeth glared at the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, while Leona looked at them as if she wanted to destroy them right away.

In front of the gods that Rex had summoned, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom seemed to be nothing but a trifling existence, as all of them prepared to attack the barrier.

“...”

At that moment, Genie received a notification.

In a pub somewhere in Itaewon, Seoul.

There was a large TV set up inside the pub where plenty of people gathered to watch whenever interesting things happened in Athenae. All of the customers lamented as they watched the scene on the TV.

“Is this the end of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?”

“The Corrupted God, the God of Snakes, Leona. There’s still the remaining 1.5 million-strong Hell Corps. There’s no way that they will be able to stop this.”

“This is a balance breaker, no? There’s no way that someone will be able to stop that.”

The people voiced their bitterness as they downed their beers. Among them was a woman, who was leisurely ordering her own beer. Another woman, Han So-Won, who was sitting facing the first, could not take her eyes off of the television.

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was both a role model and the object of everyone’s envy. It was a very sad thing to witness the destruction of such a wonderful kingdom.

Gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp—

“Kyaaaa! The beer tastes very delicious today!” So-Won’s friend gulped down her cold and refreshing draft beer and shouted in admiration.

So-Won looked at her friend incredulously. “Aren’t you Player Minhyuk’s fan? This b*tch, the Beyond the Heavens will be destroyed today, yet you’re acting like that. Weren’t you the one that kept on praising him every single day?”

The woman, who drank her beer and chomped on a chicken leg, was none other than Lee Minhwa. She looked at her friend calmly and said, “Well? Do you know why I’m here? And why am I so calm despite all of this?”

Han So-Won’s confusion grew at the question.

‘She’s right, shouldn’t Joy Co. Ltd. be in a state of emergency right now? Then, why is Lee Minhwa here?’

“Let me tell you this.” Lee Minhwa lifted her beer pint and said, “My dear Team Leader has told me to get off work. I have been working overtime these past few days. So, my Team Leader told me that while I’m drinking beer and eating chicken to...”

Lee Minhwa looked around. She saw that everyone around her were sporting tense and nervous expressions on their faces as they waited for the imminent destruction of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Meanwhile, on the TV.

[The God of Snakes’ Elizabeth, the Corrupted God, the Marquess Leona, the First Spear God, the First Sword God, and even the First God of Magic!]

[All of them are preparing for a full-on attack toward the bloody red barrier!]

[The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will surely be erased from the map once they release their full-on attack!]

[As we speak, the full-on attacks of the several gods are now flying toward the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!]

Crack, crack, crack, crack—

Creak, creak, creak, creak—

The sound of chairs screeching and collapsing rang loudly inside the pub as the scene on the TV showed the enemies shooting a powerful force toward the red barrier that protected the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp—

Lee Minhwa, who gulped down her beer once again, looked at Han So-Won again and finally finished her words earlier. “...not miss out on the fun. He told me to make sure that I watch how the enemies, those absolute beings, get slaughtered once again. After all, it’s a sight that will not be easy to come by.”

Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeep—

Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeep—

Then, at that moment, the scene on the screen turned completely white as a loud and grating beep rang in the ears of everyone present.

“What, what the hell?!”

“What in the world is happening?!”

“What about the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom??? The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!”

So-Won looked at Minhwa in confusion before turning back to the white screen of the TV. Then, the whiteness slowly bled out and disappeared.

“What the hell is that...”

As whiteness recede and the scene of the battlefield appeared in front of them again, they saw that the attacks from the God of Snakes’ Elizabeth, the Corrupted God, the Marquess Leona, the First Spear God, the First Sword God, and the First God of Magic were all gone.

In front of the dilapidated and collapsed walls of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, covered with the bloody-red barrier, stood three men.

The man standing in the middle was riding on the back of a gigantic cow. By his side was a very beautiful man with dark hair, a nonchalant look on his face as he glared at the enemies in front of them. This man was riding on top of a very hideous and ferocious looking horse.

Snap—

The moment the beautiful man snapped his fingers, five million books appeared in the sky above them, all of them aiming at the Corrupted God.

[The Corrupted God is mine. I’ll only kill around 600,000 enemies. Kronad, don’t you dare think of crossing this line over here.]

The beautiful man with black hair looked to the other side at a white-haired man. Although the white-haired man was already old, he was still very handsome and dignified. The old man wore a white papal robe and rode on the back of a pegasus. He raised the sword in his hands and pointed it to the other half of the Hell Corps, effectively creating a line that divided both sides.

[Then, I’ll kill around 700,000. Obren, you should be the one that should not think of crossing this line.]

The two men looked at the man riding on top of the cow.

[What about you?]

[And you?]

The man riding on top of the gigantic cow was wearing a white papal robe, a gold sword hanging on his waist. The man’s black and dark eyes were a stark contrast to his fair skin and white hair. Then, the man opened his mouth.

[Me? I’ll kill them all.]

The two other men nodded in agreement.

[That's neat.]

[Not bad.]

The man riding on top of the cow glanced at the soldiers of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and showed them a kind and soft smile. However, his expression had turned a complete 180 the moment he looked at the enemies. He glared at them as he opened his mouth.

Before the man could say the words on the screen, Employee Lee Minhwa had already beaten him to the punch. "Wipe them out."

Chapter 694: The God of Death and the Hell Corps

Silence engulfed the entire area.

God of Snakes Elizabeth, one of the Six Monster Gods, might be considered as the weakest among them, but she was still an existence that could make even the Absolute Gods tremble. It was not just her, there was also the Corrupted God and the Marquess of Snakes Leona, as well as the Level 450~530 Hell Corps.

Anyone would most definitely be shaking in their boots if they saw this lineup. And yet, the words of the trio that just showed up shocked everyone watching.

[...They're lying, right? That man riding on top of the black ghostly horse said that he would kill 600,000 of the enemies?]

[What about that old man with white hair that's dressed in a white papal robe? I heard him say that he should not cross the line.]

The commentators were in disbelief, their voice shaking. The person in the middle that appeared was none other than the king of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. They had to wonder if Minhyuk was the type of person to bring liars with him.

At the same time, in the office of Joy Co. Ltd.'s Story Team.

The Story Team Leader felt both flustered and embarrassed when he saw the words 'warning' and 'error' pop out of the monitor.

'Crazy...!'

Team Leader Park Minggyu, who was in the Story Team's office to eat chicken, looked at him suspiciously. "What's the matter?"

"You know that Obren and Kronad are both talents that are a part of the Eight Pillars and can rule and control the world with their appearance alone, right?"

"Of course, I know."

"The fact that they appeared at the same time... you know what effects would appear when the two of them made an appearance like that, right?"

"I know that too."

It was just like how the effect would be different when a boss monster appeared compared to an ordinary mob. For the appearance of boss monsters, various notifications would ring in the head of the players present, and even the surroundings would change. For beings at the level of Kronad and Obren, there would be world messages that would announce their appearance. And right now, both of them had made an appearance.

[Warning!]

[The Eight Pillars of the Athenae Worldview have appeared at the same time. The system has temporarily experienced a failure.]

[Warning!]

[...Athenae Worldview...]

[The system has begun to search for a new direction!]

All of the computers inside the Joy Co. Ltd. were connected to Supercomputer Athenae. This was so they could immediately create a story in Athenae if the need arose.

Meanwhile, the viewers were scoffing at the three men that stood in front of the millions of enemies.

[Are you kidding me? Why did the Food God bring two old chuunis?]

[I think they're NPCs. If they're talking arrogantly like that, then they should be big shots, right? Then, shouldn't we receive notifications by now? If there are no notifications then they must be nothing but liars. Tch]

That was right. The viewers would often judge how strong or powerful an NPC was based on the notifications that they heard. However, neither the man with black hair nor the man with white hair trigger any notification.

In other words, while the system was busy trying to find a new direction, these people believed that Minhyuk the men that Minhyuk brought with him were just low-leveled liars.

Rumbleeeeeeee—

At that moment, the sky suddenly turned dark. It was not just the sky above the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, or the Asgan Continent. The entire world had turned dark by this sudden phenomenon.

Rumbleeeeeeee—

The ground shook fiercely as the animals roared and screamed, trying their best to flee from something unknown. There were even tens of thousands of birds flapping their wings as hard as they could and flying away. Then, the man with black hair riding on the black ghostly horse made a move. This man was none other than Obren.

[He is Evil.]

A voice, so creepy and hoarse like that of a devil, resounded in the area. It was so creepy that everyone that listened to it felt goosebumps rising on their skin.

[He dyed the ground red with the blood of hundreds of millions of humans.]

Tens of thousands of black books floated in the sky where Obren was looking at.

[Someone who even the gods are afraid of has appeared here.]

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

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

Black lightning bolt fell from the sky and fell down upon 200,000 Hell Corps.

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

The black lightning that fell thousands of times per second was like disaster incarnate.

[The ones that survive, remember his name. His name is Evil God Obren.]

“...”

“...”

“...”

Actually, Evil God Obren had only made an appearance using Minhyuk's body in the past. That was why the viewers and the commentators did not know what Obren truly looked like.

However, that was not the end. Gigantic pillars of light began to pour down from the sky. The huge light expanded until it covered half of the sky and created a huge contrast from the lingering darkness in the sky. Everywhere the light passed by, the withered flowers would bloom and the agitated animals would cry in relief.

[He is Virtuous.]

This time, the kind and gentle voice of a woman, a voice that warmed the hearts of many, rang in the area.

[He, who gave off the same warmth as a gentle mother's embrace, accepted and embraced many, becoming the king of the popes.]

Then, the white-haired old man wearing the white papal robe stepped forward and brandished his sword, creating tens of thousands of swords made of light in the sky that immediately fell down on the ground.

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

The falling swords of light destroyed hundreds of thousands of demonic beasts and Hell Corps.

The viewers and commentators were plunged into a state of disbelief as they watched the Hell Corps and demonic beasts disappear just like that. Then, the voice of the kind and gentle woman rang again.

[The ones that lived a hard life, remember the name of the person that has embraced and acknowledged your existence. His name is First Pope Kronad.]

“...!”

[...!]

Then, it came to the man standing in between them. He was neither as strong, as great or as outstanding as Evil God Obren or First Pope Kronad. But at this moment, the creepy, devilish voice and the kind, gentle voice that sounded as warm as a mother's voice rang together.

[He is a mere human being.]

[Born from an ordinary mother and an ordinary father.]

Minhyuk turned to look behind him to see the retreating soldiers of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom return. All of the people that abandoned the kingdom at Genie's orders returned. They all looked at their king and listened to his voice.

[He is but a normal human being. However, one day, he became king.]

[He is but a normal human being. However, one day, he became god.]

[Yes, indeed. He was just an ordinary human being.]

"Your Majesty Minhyuuuuuuuuuuk!"

"Your Majeeeeeeeeesty!!!"

"Your Majesty, congratulations on your safe return!!!"

Behind Minhyuk stood hundreds of thousands of Beyond the Heavens' soldiers. All of them stood tall, their expressions determined and firm as their morale rose to the sky.

[He is but a normal human being. However, he had received the love and admiration of many.]

The sword in Minhyuk's hands glittered. This was the passive skill: 'Pope's Dignity' that was attached to the Sacred Papal Sword. At the same time, the power to increase all of his skill level by +4 that was included in the Pope's Dignity finally appeared.

Flash—!

The moment Minhyuk brandished the sword in his hands, a bright light flashed and killed hundreds of demonic beasts and Hell Corps. The entire world watched in admiration as hundreds of Hell Corps and demonic beasts disappeared with every swing of his sword. Then, he rode on top of Hanwoo, who immediately charged forward. Behind him the powerful troops of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom ran forward with their weapons in hand.

Then, the space behind Obren and Kronad suddenly tore apart. Behind the terrifying Evil God Obren, thousands of his followers on top of ghostly horses rode out. Behind Pope Kronad, thousands of paladins, priests, popes and saintesses riding on top of the pegasi charged out.

All of them charged forward and began to slaughter the black sea made up of demonic beasts and Hell Corps. With every swing of the sword of the paladin, hundreds of demonic beasts and Hell Corps would die. Everywhere the followers of the Evil God passed by, the enemies' body would be torn to shreds and become unrecognizable.

On the left was Obren and on the right was Kronad. As for Minhyuk? He ran in the middle under the protection of both of them. The charging Kronad stabbed God of Snakes Elizabeth, who tried to block Minhyuk's path, with dozens of swords made of light.

"Kyaaaaaaaaack!" She shrieked as countless black lightning fell from above her.

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

Minhyuk immediately used 'Sword of Absolute Death'.

Booooooooooom—

A powerful force pierced through Elizabeth's body. However, it did not end there. Hundreds of sword lights appeared and cut through her thick and sturdy body.

"Kyahaaaaaaaaack!"

[You have killed the God of Snakes Elizabeth!]

Just like that, God of Snakes Elizabeth disappeared without being able to do anything. Marquess Leona immediately jumped in their path and tried to stop them. However, the book that Obren had summoned fluttered open before turning into a black spear that pierced through her neck. Kronad, who was behind her, also slashed her body horizontally. Minhyuk joined in and cut her from her head down to her toe.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—!

[You have killed the Marquess of Snakes Leona!]

The black Evil God's Army, the white Kronad's Army, and Minhyuk with his Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in the center, continued to advance amidst the constant notifications that rang in their ears. The scene was more than worthy of everyone's admiration.

Only ten minutes had passed. However, in that short amount of time, Obren and Kronad had already displayed their power by killing more than 1.5 million Hell Corps.

Obren was allowed to use his original strength once after being unsealed. His level right now was over 1,000. As for Kronad, he was currently at around Level 700 since his level got reduced after summoning the Sacred Papal Sword. However, he was able to exert power that was on par with Obren, because his power would increase when fighting against evil beings.

'This is impossible...'

The main culprits of this situation were speechless as they watched the Hell Corps get wiped out, as if a tsunami had passed through them. It was a completely impossible scenario for a player to achieve, which was why they were in disbelief.

However, there was one man that was very thrilled to see this scene. This man was none other than PD Kim Dageuk, whose palms were clenched tightly into fists.

Minhyuk, a mere human being that became a king and a god, was now writing a new legend.

Once again, the voice of a devil and the kind woman resounded once again.

[He is the only human that has received the help of the Eight Pillars of the World, the Evil God and the First Pope.]

[And he...]

It did not take too long for the Hell Corps and the demonic beasts to be swept away.

Dash, dash, dash, dash, dash—

Minhyuk could be seen running toward Rex, who was currently in the form of the God of Death. Warnings were constantly flashing in front of the unfortunate Rex.

[Warning!]

[The God of Death is giving you a warning!]

[If you are forced to log out, your qualifications as the God of Story will be revoked!]

At that moment, Evil God Obren's 'Book of Curse' appeared and entered Minhyuk's sword.

[Warning!]

[Obren's Book of Curse is dwelling in the enemy's sword!]

[If that sword hits you, the penalty that you will receive will double!]

[If you die, the war will be considered as over with your defeat. You will receive the -50 in all stats penalty.]

[With the Book of Curse, you will receive a -100 in all stats as a penalty.]

If that sword reached Rex, everything would be over. However, Obren and Kronad were standing beside Minhyuk. White wings appeared on the back of Minhyuk, who had both good and evil by his side.

“...!”

Staaaaaaaaaaaaab—!

The faded sword in Minhyuk's arms pierced through Rex's heart.

Minhyuk looked at Rex's helpless expression and snarled, “You m****er f*cker.”

[You have been forced to log out.]

[Your qualifications as the God of Story has been revoked.]

[You have lost 100 in all of your stats.]

In the despairing Rex's ears, the grating voice of a devil and the warm and gentle voice of the benevolent mother rang until the very end.

[He is but a normal human being. However, he might be the only human that will be acknowledged as someone with the potential to become one of the Eight Pillars of the World.]

At the same time, this notification rang in Minhyuk's ears:

Chapter 695: The God of Death and the Hell Corps

The God of Death had died. To be exact, Rex, in the form of the God of Death, had died.

Nevertheless, the God of Death had used his power and was directly involved in the episode. As a

result, the story had been changed and the God of Death had to regain his powers and lie low for quite a long time.

However, there was one thing that everyone was certain about. The God of Death held a considerable amount of power and sat in a lofty position among the Absolute Gods. Naturally, the rewards would most definitely be very, *very* generous.

Common Title

?All of your stats will increase by 7%.

?Eight Pillars' Protective Barrier

?The Unyielding One

?Double Skill

Considering Minhyuk's level, the 7% increase in all stats would bring great synergistic effects and increase in power. There was also the Eight Pillars' Protective Barrier.

'It creates a barrier that will defend one of the Eight Pillars unconditionally.'

Minhyuk was actually still clueless about the Eight Pillars. However, considering that Obren and Kronad were a part of it, he thought that there was a high probability that Athenae was also a part of the Eight Pillars.

Excluding the ones that he was familiar with, there were still quite a lot of them that he was not aware of. Whoever they were, they would either be one of the two: his ally or his enemy. Before the time when he had to confront them came, he had to build up his strength. Acquiring these skills would definitely be advantageous to him.

He turned his attention to 'Double Skill'.

'Huh? This is quite good.'

The Double Skill was a skill that invoked Minhyuk's admiration. Although it only had a 1.2% chance of getting triggered, it could double the effect of whatever skill was being used when activated.

For example, the Overlord's Technique could deal around 3,000~4,000% damage to everyone within a 40~60 meter radius. If Double Skill was activated, it would double that effect. This meant that the Overlord's Technique would deal around 6,000~8,000% damage to everyone within a 80~120 meter radius.

The 1.2% probability of triggering might be very low, but the power that it could bring was almost a cheat.

'If it gets activated during a critical situation then...'

The Double Skill would bring about a tremendous effect.

Finally, there was the ‘The Unyielding One’. When playing Athenae, there were times when players would meet great powerhouses and be forced to give in to their momentum and aura. This was something that was done by the system. However, Minhyuk could trigger ‘The Unyielding One’ once every 480 hours and resist that power once without fail.

These were the following notifications that rang in Minhyuk’s ears.

[You have sent the God of Death back to Hell.]

[You have gained 876,500,315 EXP.]

[You have gained 76,413 platinum.]

[You have acquired 2 God of Death’s SP.]

[You have obtained the Ring of Malicious Whispers.]

[You have obtained Vlatnium (4).]

[You have obtained the God of Death’s Book of Disasters.]

[You have obtained the God of Death’s Black Duck.]

[...the Dead’s Land...]

[...the One that Leads the Dead...]

Notifications rang non-stop in his ears as the black energy that spread from the spot where Rex had died hovered around Minhyuk’s body.

[God of Death’s SP is responding to you.]

[God of Death’s SP is special. It can increase the skill level of an Absolute God’s Secret.]

[God of Death’s SP is special. It can increase the level of the skill between 1~3 levels.]

[However, God of Death’s SP will randomly select the two skills that it will increase the level of.]

Minhyuk had obtained some ‘God’s SP’ in the past. God’s SP was a very cheat-like SP that could increase any skill’s level, with the exception of Absolute God’s Secrets.

Athenae was not a game where one could get ‘SP’ just because they leveled up. For them to be able to increase the level of their skills, they had to meet certain conditions or increase the level of their skill proficiency.

Because of that, rankers always wanted to obtain ‘SP’ for themselves. It was not easy to obtain SP. However, even if a player obtained just one SP, it would be able to increase their powers tremendously.

[God of Death’s SP is searching and exploring your body.]

[An unpleasant sense of discord and alienation is spreading in your body.]

“Ugh...” Minhyuk groaned as the unpleasant sense of something sticky and hot passing through and roving around his body spread in him.

[God of Death’s SP has chosen the first skill.]

A faint sense of expectation arose from Minhyuk. He had quite a lot of skills in his arsenal. However, there were quite a few of them that he no longer used. It was a natural phenomenon caused by the players' increase in level and power.

[The Overlord's Technique has been chosen!]

[God of Death's SP has increased the Overlord's Technique's level by +2!]

[Skill: Overlord's Technique's level has increased to Level 6.]

“...”

It was a pleasant notification to hear. Of course, Minhyuk thought that it would be better if it was increased by three. However, he knew that the thought was far too greedy. The fact that one SP could increase a powerful skill like Overlord's Technique by two was already incredibly good.

Minhyuk immediately checked the skill.

King's Authority

?The Overlord's Fire with an additional 5,000~7,000% attack will strike everyone within a 60~80 meter radius.

?The Overlord's Fire is a fire that cannot be easily extinguished. Once it attaches to a body, it will deal continuous damage.

?You are an Overlord's Technique's user that already has another King Authority. You can just choose one of the two types of mana and set it to use to build up the mana required for the authority.

?Your speed of gathering Overlord's Mana will increase by 1.3x.

'Come to think of it, it's been quite a long time since I obtained this skill but I have never increased its level until now.'

It seemed like the reason was because each level up was accompanied by an additional 1,000% attack. That was a tremendous increase in power for one level up.

That was not all. Even its cooldown time that was set at 240 hours before had been drastically reduced to 60 hours. Also, the radius of effect was increased and the speed of gathering the Overlord's Mana had also increased. Simply put, the powerful Overlord's Technique could now be used more often.

A man's greed knew no bounds. Since the first skill that was increased had achieved tremendous results, Minhyuk could not help but expect that the second skill would also give him shocking results.

[God of Death's SP has chosen the second skill!]

[The Inversing Giddiness has been chosen!]

[God of Death's SP has increased the Inversing Giddiness' level by +1!]

[Inversing Giddiness is a skill that originally did not have a level!]

The Food God's Secret Inversing Giddiness was originally a skill that did not have a level. However, God's SP could increase a skill's level even if there was no level or the skill level was already at MAX.

Food God's Secret

?Through the skill Inversing Giddiness, you can decrease the stat or skill level increase effect on the person that ate your dishes and received its buff effects. You can decrease it as much as the buff effect they received.

?God's dishes are special. In the event that they have been subjected to the Inversing Giddiness skill, the effects of the buff and the changes you made will not disappear even if they have been forced to log out as long as it is still within the buff duration. The opponent will have to find a special way to resolve the issue.

?An unknown ability has been added to Inversing Giddiness.

?You can now choose the ones that you want to receive the effects of the Inversing Giddiness from the ones that have eaten your dishes and received your buffs.

Actually, Minhyuk had chosen not to use the skill Inversing Giddiness too much. Even the changes in its effects were not as great as that of Overlord's Technique. Still, Minhyuk was very satisfied with what he got.

After checking all of the rewards, Minhyuk looked at Pope Kronad, the paladins, priests and saintesses that were approaching him. All of them were looking at both him and Obren with sadness. However, relief was also present in their faces.

"It's time for us to go to hell." Kronad smiled as he looked at Minhyuk and Obren.

"You both will become legends of the present."

At that moment, they all began to turn into ashes. The disappearing paladins, priests, saintesses and Kronad kept their gazes at Obren. Before Kronad's face completely disappeared and burned into ashes, he struggled to open his mouth to say, "Sorry..."

Obren remained silent as he looked at the place where Kronad had disappeared. There was no gratitude for sacrificing themselves for him. After all, they were just paying for their sins. It was what they deserved. Obren decided to focus on the days that he would spend with Minhyuk in the future.

"I'm feeling sleepy."

"...Go on, take a rest."

Even though he was unsealed, Obren was doomed to forever live inside the seasoning jar and could only spend time with Minhyuk every once in a while.

Swoosh—

Obren turned into black smoke that was sucked back inside the seasoning jar.

"R, Run!!!"

"A, aaaaaack!"

"Retreat!!!"

Upon Rex's death, the Hell Corps and the demonic beasts all turned to ashes and disappeared without a trace. As for the mercenaries that were being led by God of Money Henry, they were all rushing to escape from the combined forces of Akhan, Death, and Beyond the Heavens.

Among the fleeing enemies, Genie and the executives of the Beyond the Heavens found two Death Knights.

"...Your Majesty, they are obviously the Luvien Empire's Sword of the Gods."

"..."

Minhyuk kept his mouth shut. It was only right that they go after them and condemn them. However, now was not the time. Right now, the kingdom's soldiers and executives were all exhausted. The enemies were strong. They would incur huge damages once again if they killed those two.

Minhyuk looked at the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. He could see that their outer walls had collapsed, part of their kingdom destroyed by the enemies that had entered through those gaps. There were also the soldiers that could not hide their sadness at the deaths of their comrades, who they were just training with up until yesterday, and the families that were crying at the loss of their sons and daughters.

"Haze. Make sure to properly compensate the bereaved families. Also, prepare the graves for the victims and hold a funeral for their souls."

"...Yes, Your Majesty."

Funerals for those that died in war were rarely held. After all, it cost a lot of money. Besides, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was still at war. Everyone knew who the true enemy was, even though the Luvien Empire had tried to secretly hide their Swords among the many.

However, Haze willingly accepted the order after seeing Minhyuk's expression. *'I have never seen such an expression on His Majesty's face.'*

Haze had always wondered about the repercussions if Minhyuk became truly angry. However, the thought alone brought terror to her.

'Someone that you shouldn't dare provoke.' This was what Haze thought of His Majesty Minhyuk.

Minhyuk looked at his people and his soldiers. He addressed them briefly yet with a firm determination in his voice.

"I intend to punish those that have made our Beyond the Heavens suffer like this."

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"Beyond the Heavens! Beyond the Heavens! Beyond the Heavens!"

"Long live His Majesty Minhyuk!"

They had fought a tough and desperate battle. But in the end, they were the ones shouting to the world about their victory. Right now, Minhyuk intended to show everyone how Beyond the Heavens treat their enemies.

Luvien Empire's Nerva Sephiroth was a human being. However, he inherited the power of the Battle God and became the Absolute God's Sword.

After receiving God's power, he was able to call for the other God's Swords and was even awakening powerful armies and strong soldiers with each of the achievements that he made in this realm. Recently, Nerva Sephiroth had awakened the Sword of the Gods Knight Don, who existed from a long time ago.

Who was Knight Don? The Swords of the Gods had existed for a very long time. Even among those Swords of the Gods, there was an existence that could be said to be their commander. That was Knight Don. Even Nerva Sephiroth had to tread carefully when talking to him.

Don stood atop the outer walls of the Luvien Empire, watching the stars twinkle in the sky above them. That was when he felt a presence from a distance. His expression turned strange when he chased after the presence.

'What kind of power is this?'

Don had another title, the 'Knight of All Creation'. He had a special power that allowed him to know what kind of person he was dealing with, just by looking at them.

Right now, there was a brave energy akin to that of a lion that was coming straight towards the Luvien Empire. However, Don did not make a fuss out of it. This was because he was confident in his own power. He just looked at the place where the brave 'lion' was coming from.

As he felt the energy, Don thought, *‘This energy must belong to a very powerful man. I’ll make sure to beat that dragon up with my own hands.’*

He thought of a righteous man that had a huge and sturdy build. However, the person that showed up in front of him was very, very unexpected. The man had flawless and fair skin, dark hair, big doe-like eyes, sharp jaws and very handsome features. He was wearing a bloody-red armor and a cape on his back that bore the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together.

‘Who is this guy?’ Don thought, his eyes scanning the man in front of him.

[You are trying to figure out the opponent in front of you.]

[The opponent carries a power that can resist your eyes!]

“...?”

Don was quite shocked. This person in front of him could resist his eyes? However, he also found it quite interesting.

[The opponent has given your eyes permission to look!]

[He is in possession of demonic energy on par with the devil.]

[He is in possession of holy power on par with the pope.]

[He is in possession of the power of the Sword God.]

[He is in possession of the power of the Food God.]

[He is in possession of the protection of the Empires’ Ruler...]

[He is in possession...the Elven King...]

[He is in possession...the Dragon King...]

[He is in possession...the Evil God...]

[He is in possession...the First Pope...]

[He is the first human in this world to have achieved and reached the realms of the True God!]

[He might be one of the Eight Pillars!]

“...!”

At that moment, the man walked out from the cover of the darkness, walking past the bushes that separated him from Don and looked at him with a cold gaze..

“I am Beyond the Heavens’ King Minhyuk. I request an audience with His Majesty Nerva Sephiroth.”

This is the appearance of the insignificant, yet outstanding king.

Chapter 696: The Ten Plagues

After the end of the episode: God of Death and the Hell Corps’ Invasion, Minhyuk immediately called for Haze and the Knowledge Star Jarrod to give them an order, which was for them to fully grasp the current dynamics and movements of the Luvien Imperial Army.

At the Beyond the Heavens' executive meeting, Jarrod reported, "According to the reports that we have confirmed, the Luvien Empire is slowly nibbling at the territories under the Masserati Kingdom."

"Masserati Kingdom is a kingdom created by a player. They have probably judged that it was easier to deal with them since they are less organized?"

The people that resided in Athenae and the players were generally different from each other. Players had only ever fought in real wars in this place. As for the residents of this world, whether they were from an ordinary kingdom or an empire, all of them had experienced or were experiencing war since young.

"However, Absolute Monarch Richard is not someone that can easily be taken down like that. According to our reports, he has been holding out in Esser Fortress for two weeks now."

"From what it looks like, they will use the fall of Masserati Kingdom to warn us."

"Yes, that's right."

Everyone turned to look at Minhyuk, watching him rub his chin in thought. All of them were aware that they could not let their emotions affect their judgment on this matter. Although the cries of their people was enough to shake the entire kingdom, if they acted on their feelings, they might probably be running on a path that would bring about a swift collapse of their kingdom.

"I will go to the Luvien Empire and ask them to pay for their sins."

"...!"

"...!"

"...Your Majesty."

Shock was painted on the faces of everyone present.

What kind of existence was the Luvien Empire? They were a large organization that had cast their net and covered the entire continent. There were so many powerful and talented individuals in their empire that even the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom could not compare with them. Even their military forces were around eight times bigger than the troops nurtured in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. That was basically the difference between a kingdom and an empire.

It was also a nation that had forced an 'alliance' with other kingdoms and empires throughout the continent, by bringing them down to the brink of destruction. One wrong move against them and one could become the target of countless kingdoms and empires.

Everyone looked worried at his suggestion. However, Minhyuk was grinning.

"I will leave no trace behind."

"What do you mean by that, Your Majesty?" Haze asked, completely puzzled by his words.

.

Minhyuk took out a book that was wrapped in thick chains from his inventory. One look at it and everyone already felt an unpleasant sense tingling at the bottom of their spines. This book was none other than the ‘God of Death’s Book of Disaster’, an item that he acquired after sending the God of Death back to hell.

Knowledge’s Star Jarrod quickly checked the book’s information.

?The God of Death’s Ten Plagues will fall wherever the book’s owner wants it to fall into.

?The First Plague. The river, wherever you want it to be, will turn into blood.

?The Second Plague. Frogs will come out from the waters and cover the lands.

?The Third Plague. Lice will infest...

?The Fourth Plague. A variety of flies will...

?The Fifth Plague. Pestilence...

?...

?...

?The owner of the God of Death’s Book of Disasters can end the plagues whenever they want. However, whether it is fully used or not, once it is opened, the God of Death’s Book of Disasters will disappear.

?The owner of the God of Death’s Book of Disasters can imitate the voice of the God of Death.

?The God of Death’s Book of Disaster will not harvest any human life during its duration. In other words, everything is nothing but an illusion.

“...!”

Jarrod could only groan after checking the information of the book. These plagues had no limit. Wherever it would fall, it would literally bring about a huge disaster. It could also allow them to initiate a negotiation.

One after the other, the executives of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom began to check the information of the book. That was when the players realized something.

‘This...’

‘*Did they take inspiration from the Ten Plagues of Egypt?*’

There were many cases in Athenae where the stories, artifacts and items had taken inspiration from actual myths and legends from reality. From what they heard, the Chinese Server had a God-rank artifact by the name ‘Green Dragon Crescent Blade’. It was probably the case for this particular item too.

“What about the Sword of the Gods that intervened in this war?”

“They moved as if they did not do anything in the empire. We can expect the Luvien Empire to pretend as if they weren’t involved at all. From what I heard, the Luvien Empire had deliberately sent them to the Masserati camp to hide them away from prying eyes.”

“I see. Then, our Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will secretly send support to Masserati Kingdom.”

“We will send support to Masserati Kingdom?” Haze expressed her doubts. She knew that support did not simply mean that. She thought for a moment before speaking up again, “Your Majesty, the support you’re speaking about should have a ‘price’, am I right?”

“That’s correct.”

“That also means that we will hide our identities.”

Minhyuk nodded. If the Beyond the Heavens openly formed an alliance with the Masserati Guild and helped them stop the Luvien Empire, then they would just give the empire justification to pursue them.

Besides, there was no harm in hiding their identities. After all, as long as the Luvien Empire did not have any solid proof, they would have no other choice but to swallow their anger the moment Beyond the Heavens denied their allegations.

“If that’s the case, then it’s better to send only a few of them.”

“We should do that. Ah, it would be better if we can make a team. What kind of people do you think will apply for the Masserati Kingdom Support Team?”

There were too many people around Minhyuk that had a deep-seated hatred for the Luvien Empire. Everyone nodded at Minhyuk. Among them, there was one man that looked extremely excited. He was none other than Minhyuk’s father and the chairman of Ilhwa Group, Black Dragon.

“Son.”

“Yes, dad?”

Black Dragon, with a flushed look on his face, asked, “Can I think of a name for the team?”

“Of course.” Minhyuk readily agreed. However, he saw the faces of some of his guild members turn dark. He thought, *‘Hmm? What’s the matter with these guys?’*

Minhyuk looked at them in confusion while Black Dragon practically vibrated in his seat with excitement. Meanwhile, the guild members were recalling the team name that Black Dragon had come up with in the past.

‘Is the team going to be called Power Infinity Great King God General Magister Dark Breaker again...?’

‘What will the team name be this time...?’

‘Haaa...’

As for Black Dragon? He was thinking, *‘Fufufufufufu. Everyone will surely be surprised by my naming sense once again!’*

[Nerva Sephiroth.]

[He was an emperor sent by the God of Battle in the chaotic human world.]

[This emperor will correct the chaotic world and rule over everyone in the world.]

This was how Nerva Sephiroth was depicted in the stories. This very same Nerva Sephiroth was looking at the Swords of the Gods Elainey and Rend with an indifferent expression on his face.

“The Beyond the Heavens’ troops are far stronger than what we expected. Even the Spear God called Ben, the Lesser Demon Elpis, as well as the other vassals, have far exceeded our expectations.”

“Although they are a kingdom created by nothing more than a foreigner, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom has far surpassed a considerable number of kingdoms in the continent.”

“The people and soldiers adore and serve their king, Minhyuk, wholeheartedly.”

Basically, Elainey and Rend were telling him to be wary of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Nerva was actually aware that Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had been involved in the war between the Luvien Empire and the Eivelis Empire. However, it would be quite funny to see a proud and arrogant emperor like him not letting a small kingdom go, and try to attack them because of something in the past. If the people find out about that, he would most definitely be a laughingstock.

‘For now, we should focus on devouring the Masserati Kingdom.’

Nerva had already given the numerous kingdoms and empires under him an order to attack the Masserati Kingdom. If they decided to rashly advance and deal with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom right now, then the empire might receive huge damages.

“This emperor has trusted you to deal with this yet you come back with results like this. I might start to doubt your qualifications if things continue to go on like this.”

Flinch!

Flinch!

Nerva Sephiroth was the emperor that was chosen by the Battle God. The power in his voice made the two Swords of the Gods tremble and shake.

“Lead our knights to the Masserati Kingdom, who is occupying our lands as they pleased. I will only accept the news of your victory. Otherwise, you will have to pay for your sins.”

Only after that did the Swords of the Gods retreat. Nerva felt his temples throb from his exhaustion. However, another report came to him.

“Your Majesty, the Beyond the Heavens’ King has requested an audience.”

“...!”

It was very shocking news. The Beyond the Heavens King himself came to visit? The report even mentioned that the man came alone.

Nerva watched as the Beyond the Heavens’ King Minhyuk entered at his command. The man had a head full of dark hair, shining bright eyes, a sharp jawline, and a straight nose. It was completely contrary to his own white skin, fierce eyes and long blonde hair.

On this day, the emperor of a huge empire and the king of a small kingdom finally met.

The moment Minhyuk met Nerva...

[You are facing a transcendental being that has inherited the power of the Battle God!]

[The Emperor’s Authority is forcing you to give in!]

[You will not be able to resist even if you try your hardest!]

“...?!”

He had no choice but to kneel on both knees even though he was walking confidently.

‘Crazy... He forced me to kneel with just one glance?’

Of course, this was all caused by Nerva Sephiroth’s passive skill. Nerva Sephiroth was now smiling at him in satisfaction. There were only two people in the world that had escaped the clutches of his ‘Emperor’s Authority’.

“I wonder why the king of a distant continent has traveled this far? And why did you suddenly request an audience with this emperor?”

Nerva was very arrogant and snobbish. However, that did not mean that he could just disregard and ignore a guest of great status. After all, an emperor had great etiquette and courtesy. Only if a true absolute being had both manners and courtesy would they be able to experience unparalleled power.

“I have heard that the Luvien Empire is known to be the most beautiful and peaceful empire so I really wanted to visit it. And truly, the Luvien Empire is as beautiful and magnificent as the rumors said it to be. I am curious as to how you manage it.”

Minhyuk spoke softly, his head bowed down as he continued to stay on his knees.

In the end, Nerva was an emperor and Minhyuk was just a king. If he acted rashly here, he would give Nerva the justification to wage a war against the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. However, that did not mean that he would not do anything. In fact, Minhyuk's words were laced with thorns.

The empire was magnificent and beautiful? How did he manage it? He was, in fact, asking if Nerva felt good using the money that he obtained by raiding other kingdoms and empires and living a rich and lavish life.

"This is all because the people are repaying this emperor for all of the things that I have given them. Don't you think so, too?" Nerva spun up bullshit right on the spot.

"So, what's the real reason behind your visit?"

The gaze that Nerva used to look at Minhyuk turned sharp. This was the gaze of an absolute being.

Minhyuk's response was very forward. "It's because I have seen some familiar faces in the war that we fought not too long ago."

"Hmm..." Nerva rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Familiar faces? From what I heard, there were many undead and demonic beasts during that war. So, why did you come here to look for them? Perhaps..."

Nerva's eyes narrowed sharply, his expression obviously questioning Minhyuk. Minhyuk just smiled softly.

"I just mentioned the familiar faces that I have seen back then. Other than that, I came here to inform you that I want to stay in the empire for a few days."

"A few days? That much is fine. However, even if you are the king of a nation, you have to know that our imperial family will not be able to serve you properly."

Nerva meant that Minhyuk should leave. Did he think that he would be welcomed as a distinguished guest and served wholeheartedly? But Minhyuk still nodded in agreement. After all, that was what he wanted anyways.

"I see. It would be good if we can have a cup of tea sometime soon."

However, Nerva was indifferent. "I don't like tea."

"Is that so? Even so, I believe you will want to meet with me and drink a cup soon. You'll have to know, I can make delicious refreshments."

'Are you telling me that I will seek you out myself?' Nerva frowned. No matter how he listened to those words, he could only take it as Minhyuk saying that he, Nerva, would find Minhyuk first.

Nerva stood up and left him behind. However, he spoke to him one last time. "It's quite rude of you to stop by in the middle of the night. You have obviously interrupted my bedtime."

"Please forgive me, Your Majesty. How should I apologize to you..." Minhyuk answered quietly. "I might be the Beyond the Heavens' King but I am also a chef and

a good one at that. From what I heard, your knights will be going to war, right? How about I serve them my dishes as an apology?"

Nerva asked him outright, "What in the world are you planning?"

Minhyuk just shook his head at the cold and harsh question. "I don't have any plans, Your Majesty. Ah, there's one more thing."

Minhyuk showed a very bright smile as he continued his words. "Our Beyond the Heavens Kingdom has this tradition where we will write a short greeting and share it to a precious person during our first meeting. I have personally written a greeting for you, Your Majesty. If you will, please allow me to present it to you."

"You have my permission," Nerva answered as he tried to deactivate his Emperor's Authority for a while. But before he could do so, he was already met with Minhyuk's sharp gaze. He watched as the man kneeling in front of him slowly stood on one of his legs.

[The opponent is resisting your Emperor's Authority!!!]

"...!"

Nerva clenched his fists, his eyes fixed on the man, who slowly got on his other leg.

[The opponent has completely suppressed your Emperor's Authority!]

This was effect 'The Unyielding One', from Minhyuk's new title, 'Candidate for the Eight Pillars'.

'H, how...!'

Nerva was very shocked. There were only two people in the world that had escaped the grasps of his Emperor's Authority. Today, the third person to do so had appeared.

Minhyuk smiled softly as he handed Nerva a rolled parchment. "This greeting is written using the special characters from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. I'm sure you will be able to interpret the meaning of these words since you have a lot of talented figures in the Luvien Empire."

"I understand. You may leave."

At those words, Minhyuk retreated and left the audience hall. As for Nerva Sephiroth? He hurriedly called for the experts of the Luvien Empire and tasked them to decipher the words written in the parchment that Minhyuk had handed to him.

"I cannot sense any evil energy coming from this parchment."

"There are no powers that are meant to harm you inside, Your Majesty."

"It's nothing but a letter."

Even the experts that had studied the ancient languages also gathered.

"We cannot interpret this language."

“We cannot understand. This is the first time that we have seen or heard about a language like this.”

Nerva immediately threw everyone out as he turned to look at the text with a solemn expression on his face.

[??? ??????. (Nerva, you’re a frauckring brastrard.)]?

It was a message that only Koreans would be able to understand.

Nerva rubbed his chin in thought as he stared at the parchment seriously. “These words obviously have a profound meaning...”

As expected, Hangul was a very great language.

Chapter 697: The Ten Plagues

The Swords of the Gods Elainey and Rend could not forget the sharp killing intent that appeared in the eyes of the man that they had met in the hallway.

‘I did not expect him to come over to the empire as soon as the war ended.’

‘What a crazy king.’

Even if he came here personally, it would not matter if he was a king or not, he would still not be able to punish the knights of the empire without any clear justification. If it was found that he did something to them, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would be forced to pay the price for that crime.

Rend and Elainey looked back at the knights and the soldiers that gathered behind them, ready to go.

“What’s the status in Esser Fortress?”

“The Masserati Kingdom’s resistance is much stronger than what we expected.”

It was only natural. This was because the Masserati Kingdom’s territories would continue to be devoured by the great and mighty Luvien Empire once they had taken over Esser Fortress.

“However, looking at the current situation. We believe that it would only be a matter of time before they fall.”

“Once we enter the battlefield, they will most definitely fall within a week.”

Elainey and Rend nodded at each other. The knights that they were going to lead were the ‘Hundred Battle Knights’, the very same knights that His Majesty Nerva Sephiroth had nurtured with his own powers.

The Hundred Battle Knights were the ones that had received the Battle God’s recognition and rewards after Nerva had successfully met the conditions upon completing the conquest of another kingdom. The level of their force could be said to be so high that no other knight within the empire could fight against them.

These people, along with fifty thousand troops of the Imperial Army, were more than enough to deal with the enemy. There were only 120,000 troops of the Imperial Army who were fighting actively on the battlefield. If they joined, it would likely only take a week to obtain control of the war and gain victory.

At that moment, a knight approached Elaine and Rend and gave them a report.

“...What?!”

“What did you say...?!”

The knight's report was extremely shocking. They could soon see a man approach them right after the knight finished his words.

Elaine and Rend had witnessed how this man danced around the battlefield. He was the king of a nation and a god and was the first person to make the Luvien Empire suffer a defeat. This man was none other than Minhyuk.

“Are you going to war now?”

“...Yes, that's right.”

Even if they were the Swords of the Gods, Minhyuk, the man in front of them, was the king of a nation. They had to bow down and show courtesy to him.

“I have disturbed His Majesty Nerva's bedtime because I suddenly requested an audience. So, as an apology, I've asked that he let me personally cook a meal to cheer on his men that are going to war.”

“A meal...?”

From what they heard, the dishes made by Beyond the Heavens' Minhyuk were so delicious that one would be able to hear a heavenly voice the moment they took their first bite. There were also many rumors about how excellent his buffed dishes were to the point that he could bring an ordinary soldier to the level of a knight.

‘Are those fake and ridiculous rumors what made the present Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?’

Indeed. The Luvien Empire's Swords of the Gods Elaine and Rend did not believe such rumors. In fact, even Emperor Nerva did not believe it. This was because none of the people from the Luvien Empire had encountered Food God Minhyuk's dishes even once.

After all, those dishes could only be made by Food God Minhyuk. There was no way that he would cook for the people of the Luvien Empire, or even do something that would be beneficial to them.

‘It seems like the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom has created several false rumors to attract people when they established their kingdom.’

In fact, there was someone that could confidently say that those were rumors. That person was the Imperial Chef Ruval. Although not at the level of the Swords of the Gods, Ruval was considered a chef that had received the favor of one of the Absolute Gods, the God of Cooking. He was also

considered as a Buff Chef and was someone that increased the power of the Swords of the Gods with his dishes.

‘His dishes are very surprising. However, the effects in the rumors are too absurd to be considered real.’

Eating Ruval’s dish would make them 1.3x stronger. But from what they heard, eating the Beyond the Heavens’ King’s dishes would make anyone at least 1.5x stronger. What kind of bullshit was that?

‘What? What the hell is this?’

However, Elainei and Rend found it ridiculous that someone like him would bother to cook for them.

‘Is he going to put poison in?’

The quick-witted Elainei shook his head. “It’s fine. We’ll just get sleepy on the road if our stomachs are full. Beef jerky is more than enough for us.”

“We’re also fine with the way things are.”

“This won’t do. I have already made a promise with His Majesty.”

They knew that the man in front of them came here to catch them. Knowing that fact made Elainei lose his temper.

“Why do you even want to cook for us?!”

Although the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was not allied with the Masserati Kingdom, they were not hostile with each other. This was a fact that Elainei knew full well. So, why would someone like Minhyuk hold on to them even though they had already firmly refused his offer?

“Are you trying to poison us?”

“Sir Elainei.” Rend tapped him on his shoulders.

However, Minhyuk’s face had already turned cold. “That’s quite a rude thing to say to a king of a nation, don’t you think so? You’re saying that I’ll kill everyone here?”

“...”

“Elainei. Do you think that he would give us poisoned food right now? Once everyone dies here, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will not be able to escape the wrath of the Luvien Empire and face destruction.”

“...”

Unless someone was a fool, they would not let something like that happen.

“Please forgive me.”

“The damage has already been done. It has already made me feel uncomfortable. I have no choice but to report this to His Majesty.”

“That... Please forgive us, Your Majesty Minhyuk.”

Elainey, even Rend and the rest of the knights, bowed their heads and showed courtesy.

Even though Minhyuk was nothing but a king of a small nation, Emperor Nerva was someone that placed importance on courtesy and manners. If it was made known that his vassals were doing as they pleased and acting rudely, as a strict Emperor, Nerva might even take their heads off.

Minhyuk looked at them. “I’ll be honest with you.”

He took a step closer toward Elainey and Rend and lowered his voice so only they could hear. “I am a king. However, His Majesty Nerva might just be the emperor of the entire continent. Why do you think I came here and declared that I will cook for you?”

“...”

The two were at a loss. After all, it was better to seek a friendship and alliance with the Luvien Empire. Of course, there was no way that they had not seen the majesty and dignity of the Luvien Empire.

‘He’s wise.’

‘If he cooks for us then he will be able to contribute to our victory. Will he use that opportunity to get a proper audience with His Majesty?’

‘This makes sense.’

“Still, your sins will not disappear.”

“Cough!!!”

“I’m sorry.”

Minhyuk looked at them fiercely. However, in the end, he just sighed and patted them on their shoulders.

“Alright. Let’s do it like this. I will still cook for you. However, if you are satisfied with my dishes, you have to give me a book about your ‘Spearmanship’ or ‘Axe Technique’.

“...Yes?”

The Swords of the Gods had books where the art that they were proficient in were written on. For players, these books would become skills. For NPCs, they would only be a book that they could learn and practice on.

This was something that all of the players were aware of. In fact, among the players, there were quite a few that had received something similar from the Swords of the Gods. However, what they received were the lowest ranking books. But even that had exceeded a considerable number of swordsmanship that are considered excellent in this world.

“That’s only if you’re satisfied with my dishes. You can just forget about it if you’re not satisfied.”

“We understand.”

“Yes, only if we’re satisfied.”

Minhyuk grinned widely. *‘If their spearmanship and axe technique gets passed down to the soldiers of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, they will surely become stronger.’*

In fact, Minhyuk had deliberately spoken words that he did not mean, in order to coax them and induce a quest, which was now floating in front of him. The quest required him to satisfy Elaine and Rend with his dishes. The grade of the book that he would receive would depend on the amount of satisfaction that he would get.

“I’ll get started then.”

Rumbleeeeeeee—

Pppiiiiiiiiiiii—!

Minhyuk threw out a small trailer, which grew larger, in front of them. The trailer immediately recognized the strong existences near him, Elaine and Rend.

Rumbleeeeeeee—

Hot flames soared from the chimney and the two vents on the roof.

Minhyuk, who climbed into the trailer, was sporting an expression that was filled with interest.

There was one more reward that he had obtained after he defeated Rex, the ‘God of Death’. It was none other than the ‘God of Death’s Black Duck’.

?God of Death's Black Duck has the power to lay eggs.

?The Black Duck will lay 100 eggs every month.

?The duck that will come out from the Black Duck’s egg will automatically come out as an adult.

?Black Duck is a delicacy. It has a flavor that is hard to come by in this realm.

?The duck born from the Black Duck’s egg will greatly increase one’s STR and AGI. It can also help increase the level that has not risen for a long time.

It was a special ingredient. Minhyuk could obtain a hundred black ducks every month. Of course, the black ducks that he obtained would be incapable of producing eggs. Still, it was a hundred ducks every month. Their meat could even increase STR, AGI and a variety of other things.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Minhyuk stood in front of a cauldron and cooked with everything that he got. The dish that he was preparing was none other than duck jumulleok, a dish made by stir-frying marinated duck with red seasoning. It was a dish that could make Minhyuk drool just by thinking about it.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Sweat started to flow down Minhyuk’s forehead as he continued to stir-fry the marinated duck inside the huge cauldron.

Minhyuk was truly doing his best. The first reason was so that he could partake in the tasty dish. The second reason was, *‘The greater the buff that they received, the more they will weaken.’*

However, for those that did not know him, thoughts appeared as they watched.

‘Why is he working so hard for someone like us?’

‘A king of a nation is actually cooking for us?’

Rend and Elaine had attacked Beyond the Heavens Kingdom just a few days prior. Of course, they were confident that the Food God and his vassals were unaware of that fact.

As the king continued to cook, sweat started to drip down his body while his muscles twitched and moved beneath his sleeves. He was already handsome. However, this figure made him even more dashing.

‘...Is this the kind of person the king of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is?’

For a moment, the thought of wanting to serve such a king floated in their heads. However, that was blasphemy. It was completely unloyal. How could they think of leaving His Majesty Nerva? Still, they had never heard of a king working so hard for just mere knights.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk’s mind was filled with his own thoughts.

*‘You f***ing bastards. Eat your fill and prepare to fight. This will be your last supper so you have to eat well, huh? You bastards.’*

Minhyuk had not forgotten the fact that Rend and Elaine were the ones that attacked the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

[Elaine’s favor has increased.]

[The Luvien Empires’ Sword of the God Elaine has realized something new as he watched Beyond the Heavens King.]

[All of your stats will increase by 0.1%.]

[Elaine’s favor has increased.]

[The Luvien Empires’ Sword of the God...]

[...stats will increase by 0.1%.]

‘Huh?’

What kind of expression would they sport once they realized the true reason why Minhyuk was doing this? However, Minhyuk did not stop there. He even triggered his God’s Voice.

[The god, the king of a nation, is trying to bring comfort to those that are heading to a faraway battlefield.]

[Even if it’s only a small gesture, he hopes that his dishes would be able to cheer up those that would march a long and arduous path.]

[He is doing his best to cook for you.]

Ppiiiiiiiiiii—

Rumbleeeeeee—

At the same time, the blazing Eternal Flames shot up from the trailer's vents. It was not just the Swords of the Gods, even the knights and the soldiers could not help but watch in admiration as the sound of the dish cooking rang in their ears. There were even some soldiers that started to cry.

[Elaine's favor has increased.]

[...stats will increase by 0.1%.]

[Rend's favor has increased.]

[...stats will increase by 0.1%.]

[Hundred Battles' Volvotta favor has increased.]

[...STR will increase +1.]

[Hundred Battles' Ambro favor has increased.]

[...STR will increase +1.]

[Soldier Verlyn's favor has increased...]

[Soldier Venom's favor has increased...]

However, Minhyuk did not hear these notifications. He just did his best to complete the best and the worst dish while thinking about their punishment.

[You have completed the Duck Jumulleok.]

[Trance. It's a dish that has your wrath, a heart to kill, hatred, and will to take revenge, poured into it.]

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

'Eh?'

In reality, one could still decide to cook for others even if they hated them. Just like a wife that cooked even after fighting with her husband, a chef toward a bad customer, and an employee toward a boss that they did not like.

However, Minhyuk's anger was far greater than that. The cries of sorrows of his beloved people, the soldiers, and the family of the bereaved were still echoing in his ears. Because of that, the first dish that contained his anger and fury had made an appearance.

Another set of notifications rang.

[You have only ever cooked with a happy heart.]

[However, sometimes, you will need to cook even if you are overcome with anger.]

[You, who have made an excellent dish despite being consumed by anger, have received a special privilege.]

[The skill: 'Ingredient Tracking' will change into 'Ingredient Search'.]

Emperor Nerva did not even bother to give a room to Minhyuk inside the imperial castle, opting to drive him out to one of the houses inside the capital. It was a cold and harsh treatment. However, it was also very favorable to Minhyuk. A man, who looked just like Minhyuk, suddenly appeared inside the castle grounds. It could be seen that the man was holding a black book that was wrapped in thick chains.

This man was made using the ‘Great Sage Heaven’s Equal’s Cloning Technique Parchment’. Minhyuk’s clone slowly unfolded the thick chains that wrapped around it before reading the book’s first chapter aloud, “The First Plague.”

Elsewhere, at the same time.

Nerva was hand in hand with his dearly beloved princess, who had just turned eleven years old, taking a walk and gazing at the pond inside the castle grounds.

“F, father...”

“What’s the matter princess?” Nerva asked, a shiver suddenly running down his spine as he hurriedly looked at the direction where his princess was pointing her finger at. There, he saw the pond turning red with blood.

At that moment, the sky covering the Luvien Empire darkened, as a dark and dreary voice rang loudly in everyone’s ears.

[The First Plague.]

[Blood will color the rivers red.]

“...!”

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s counterattack had finally begun!

Chapter 698: The Ten Plagues

Passive Skill

?Once the skill is triggered, the system will search for the ingredient that correspond to the type of effect and cuisine that you choose. The search will search within a ten kilometer radius. The skill will also suggest recipes according to the buff effect + ingredients + cuisine, and will also suggest alternative ingredients for the dish.

?There is no limit on the number of times that it can be used. However, the skill can only be used once a month.

?The Ingredient Search skill will guide you toward any ‘special’ or ‘gourmet’ cooking ingredients within a one kilometer radius.

?If you find the ingredient and have ‘read’ it, you will not be able to use the Ingredient Search for a month.

The Ingredient Tracking skill was a skill that Minhyuk often made use of. It allowed him to search for the perfect ingredient by choosing the type and effects that the dish should have. This skill had made it convenient for him to find ingredients with the effect that he needed whenever he was trying to make buffed dishes.

Right now, the Ingredient Tracking skill had changed into the ‘Ingredient Search’ skill. The original abilities that the Ingredient Tracking had were retained, and new abilities were added!

*‘Now, I can search for ingredients even if I stay still in one place.’*Minhyuk smiled as he handed out the finished duck jumulleok.

“Tell the soldiers that I will cook for them if they come back from the war.”

The soldiers gulped back their saliva. It did not matter if Minhyuk was a great chef or not. There was no way that he would be able to feed tens of thousands of people.

*‘It would be easier to kill them if I had fed them but...’*Minhyuk thought, a bitter smile hanging on his face.

However, Elaine and Rend completely misinterpreted the regret on his face. Because of this misinterpretation, Minhyuk was able to harvest interest, good will and favor from the two.

‘A king that feels pity for the hungry soldiers of another empire...’

‘Look at those sad eyes!’

The two suddenly thought that Minhyuk was truly a wonderful and splendid king. The duck jumulleok was only distributed to those at the legion commander-rank. This meant that only two hundred people would be able to taste the dish.

‘The main protagonists of all those fake rumors are finally in front of us!’

‘The Beyond the Heavens’ King is probably too sad because he could not give a strong boost in power to all of the people here. After all, there are just too many of us.’

Elaine and Rend both shook their heads.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk stared at the duck jumulleok in front of him. He was the type of person who was a sucker for the traditional way of eating dishes. Even if he had to eat it only once, he would make sure that he would eat it properly. That was also the reason why he had around 10,000 butane stoves and grilling plates in his inventory.

He took out the grilling plate and stove, before gently placing the already cooked duck jumulleok on it, keeping it warm by using the lowest heat setting on the stove.

Bubble, bubble, bubble, bubble—

Minhyuk grabbed a wooden spatula and began to stir the bubbling red sauce of the duck jumulleok, prompting a gush of white steam out in the open. Then, he hurriedly pulled off the lid of his rice bowl. After that, he quickly scooped a spoonful of the duck jumulleok, filled with plenty of red duck meat from the sauce, onions and perilla leaves.

"Fwoo! Fwoo! Chomp!" Minhyuk blew on the spoonful of duck jumulleok before pushing it in his mouth. The sweet and spicy flavor spread in his mouth the moment he took a bite.

"Ho~"

Because the meat was still very hot, he could not help but let out a breath as he rolled it around in his mouth. Still, it was a delight. Then, he took a spoonful of hot rice and placed it in his mouth.

'The rice tastes sweet.' Minhyuk thought that this was the perfect expression to describe the rice that he was eating. Perhaps it was because he used some good rice?

This time, Minhyuk grabbed a piece of perilla leaf. Then, he grabbed three pieces of duck meat dipped in ssamjang and placed it on top of the leaf along with some garlic and seasoned chives. Then, he made a wrap and placed everything in his mouth.

Munch, munch, munch—

The fragrant scent of perilla leaves immediately wafted through his nose as the savory and meaty flavor of the garlic and the duck meat spread in his mouth.

After that, Minhyuk picked up the bowl of bean sprout soup that he made along with the duck jumulleok and took a sip. The refreshing soup rinsed down the spiciness and greasiness that lingered in his mouth.

Just like that, Minhyuk ate four pieces of duck meat in a row. Minhyuk thought, *'Wow. How can something like this taste this good...?'*

Rend, who was eating his own duck jumulleok, paused in admiration as he watched Minhyuk eat, *'Aaaah. What a very down-to-earth and humble king...!'*

Rend was now completely blinded by affection after having a taste of Minhyuk's dish.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk began to cut the remaining duck jumulleok on the grill with his scissors. Then, he covered his rice bowl with the lid and shook it, before pouring the contents over the grilling plate and sprinkling them with some chopped perilla leaves and lettuce. Of course, he did not forget to drizzle it with the savory and fragrant sesame oil.

Sizzle—

Using his wooden spatula, Minhyuk skillfully tossed and turned the fried rice on his grilling plate. After stir-frying it well, he carefully spread it out on the grilling plate before sprinkling it with some seaweed flakes that curled and danced on top of it.

Minhyuk turned off the heat. Then, he grabbed his spoon and mixed the still-hot duck jumulleok fried rice.

"Fwooooo!"

He scooped a mouthful and blew on it gently before putting everything in his mouth. Heat spread in his mouth. However, Minhyuk found it very delightful as he continued to chew on the spoonful of the fried rice.

The sweet flavor of the rice, the various vegetables, and the spicy sauce created the perfect harmony in his mouth. It was like the icing on the cake for his duck jumulleok meal.

After eating everything, Minhyuk looked around him, *‘You’re all eating well, huh?’*

They were all eating well, not knowing that this might probably be their last meal.

Elainey and Rend, who had both finished their meals, looked at each other.

‘Having a meal like this before going to the battlefield will definitely make you confident and at ease.’

‘I’ve never tasted anything like this before.’

They did not know how helpful this dish would be, but it was better to be full than hungry, although they were not expecting anything from this dish’s buffs.

[You have eaten Duck Jumulleok.]

[Legendary Dish.]

[Your STR will increase by 13%, STM will increase by 10%, and AGI will increase by 8%.]

[Your Physical and Magical Attack will increase by 20%.]

[Your Physical and Magical Defense will increase by 20%.]

[God’s Axe Technique’s level will increase by +1.]

[The buff will last for two days.]

“...!”

Rend’s eyes grew wide. It was crazy. The effects were truly freaking crazy. With this, he was confident that the fall of Masserati Kingdom, which they predicted to only happen after a week, would be finished in a day.

‘God’s Axe Technique has leveled up by one?’

This was all thanks to the description written in the ‘Black Duck’, where it would increase the level of whatever the person wanted to increase the most. In other words, the duck meat had the power to recognize what the other person wanted the most.

Rend practiced the God’s Axe Technique and he had always wanted to reach a higher level. With the +1 increase in level of the God’s Axe Technique, he was confident that had become 1.5x stronger.

“What, what a magnificent meal.”

“Amazing...”

They all developed a sense of respect for Minhyuk, the Beyond the Heavens’ King.

“If it’s a meal like this...”

“We will give you what we had promised you.”

Rend and Elaine each handed a book to Minhyuk.

[You have obtained the book about Sword of the Gods’ Rend’s Best Axe Technique.]

[You are the Beyond the Heavens’ King. The skills of the soldiers who use the axe will increase by at least one level after reading this book.]

[...book about Sword of the Gods’ Elaine’s Best Spearmanship...]

[You are the Beyond the Heavens’ King...]

The results were quite excellent. Rend and Elaine’s faces were filled with smiles.

“Once we return from the war, we will surely tell His Majesty about your contributions, Your Majesty Minhyuk.”

“Perhaps, His Majesty will view you in a positive light too.”

“Alright.”

Minhyuk nodded at them, watching as they marched to war. They could not help but admire Minhyuk, who sent them off from the entrance, as their march brought them further away from the empire.

“Hoo. The Beyond the Heavens’ King is a much better man than I thought.”

“You think so too?”

“I think it would be very nice if the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and our Luvien Empire forges a close relationship.”

Then, they told one of the soldiers next to them, “Let His Majesty know that His Majesty Minhyuk’s cooking has brought no harm to us.”

“We have tried it ourselves, so we are sure.”

They all waved at Minhyuk, who was also waving at them.

Minhyuk smiled at their leaving backs. *‘You better look carefully, you f*ckers.’*

He recalled the quest that he received when he faced Nerva Sephiroth. Back then, Nerva had scoffed at him when Minhyuk insinuated that Nerva would want to have a cup of tea with him soon.

The quest sounded easy. However, that was not the case at all. The rank, which was at SSS, was proof of how hard it was. This was the simplest show of how powerful and influential Nerva was.

‘Shall I speed things up a bit?’

Minhyuk started to make his move.

[The First Plague.]

[Blood will color the rivers red.]

A dark and dreary voice suddenly rang across the entire Luvien Empire as the rivers that ran across the empire slowly turned red with blood.

“B, blood... Kyaaaaaack!”

“Kyaaaaaaaack!”

“H, Heok!!!”

“M, mom!!!”

In the wells used by the wives, in the valleys where the children ran around, even the water that they drank.

“*Bleeeeeegh!!!*?What the hell is this?! Isn’t this blood?!”

“The entire world is covered with blood...”

Of course, the Luvien Empire was a very powerful nation. Their mages were able to create water and provide their people with the minimum amount of potable water. However, the problem was that they did not know the cause of this.

“Your Majesty, I have heard reports that Food God Minhyuk’s dishes were of great help to those that went to war.”

Nerva nodded and asked, “What about Food God Minhyuk?”

“He has only been looking around and eating at the accommodation that you have given him.”

“...”

It was very hard not to assume. After all, this crazy thing happened as soon as he came here. However, he did not do anything at all.

At that moment, dreaded notifications rang out.

[The Second Plague.]

[The Third Plague.]

[The Fourth Plague.]

[The fish will jump out of the water. Heads will be filled with lice. And flies will take over the sky.]

“...!”

Nerva Sephiroth frowned at that. However, he suddenly felt an itch in his head.

“...”

Several lice fell on his hands when he gently combed his hair with his hands.

“Kyaaaaaaack!”

“Ugh, Aaaaaaaaack!”

“Keuhaaaaaaaack!”

“...”

Nerva immediately rushed with his retainers to the highest point in the castle to observe the situation of the capital. They were very shocked to see flies occupying the sky, turning it into a sea of black. They flew swiftly, clinging tightly on the bodies of everyone inside the capital. It was a terrible sight to see.

“Have you not found any solution to this?!”

Fortunately, they had not had any casualties yet. However, the people would be in fear, which would in turn shake their nation. If their capital was shaken, the other empires and kingdoms might see this as an opportunity. Perhaps they might even laugh at them and tell them that it was their punishment.

“We first need to figure out the cause...”

“Where’s the Beyond the Heavens’ King?!!!”

“We will check his whereabouts quickly.”

Nerva’s retainers moved, quickly returning to give their report.

“The ones we placed on his side to monitor him have said that he did not do anything.”

It was really driving him nuts. He firmly believed that the man was the cause of it all but he did not even have any physical evidence to prove his claims.

[The Fifth Plague.]

[The livestock will die and an epidemic will spread.]

“Ugh... aaaaaaaaack!”

“N, noooooo!!!”

“Urrrrrrrrrk!!!”

In just a few hours, most of the livestock inside the Luvien Empire had died. The livestock that died began to decompose in just a few hours, their carcasses rotting swiftly. The flies that covered the skies flocked and ate their dead bodies, carrying the virus in them and spreading the plague among the people. The people's skin started to turn bloody red, a nasty stench reeking from deep within their bones.

[The Sixth Plague.]

[The skin that has grown red will fester and get inflamed.]

Large abscesses grew on the bodies of the people of the empire. These abscesses were so terribly inflamed that yellow pus started to come out of them. Boils grew on everyone, whether they were unmarried women or strong men.

Then, the unidentified voice gave them a warning.

[The final disaster, the Tenth Plague, will be the punishment for the greedy one.]

Nerva concentrated on the sound of the voice.

[You will lose the one that you cherish the most.]

“...!”

The one that Nerva cherished the most was his daughter, the princess. Although three princes had been born to him, the princess, who was born in his later years, was the apple of his eye.

That was when Nerva thought, *‘Didn’t my dear princess cough a lot a few days ago?’*

Nerva hurriedly gave his orders to the knights, “Tell the Beyond the Heavens’ King that we shall have a cup of tea.”

Minhyuk had clearly told him a few days ago.

—I believe you will want to meet with me and drink a cup soon.?

Back then, Nerva just scoffed at the man. But right now, he was the one that was giving the order to do so. This was a disgrace, a disgrace that would not be easily washed away.

Two hours passed by just like that.

[The Seventh Plague.]

[The skies will bring punishment upon the land.]

Hailstones that were as big as a fist began to fall from the sky, breaking the roofs over everyone's heads and injuring the people. And that was not all, even balls of fire fell down from all over the place, burning those shattered houses and forcing the people to gather in the plaza.

“Your Majesty!!!”

“Your Majesty Nerva!!! Please save us from this disaster, we beg you!!!”

As he listened to the cries of his people, Nerva thought, *‘How the hell did he do this?’*

He was both curious and doubtful.

‘Is it really possible for a person to have power like this?’

Nerva's common sense dictated that it was impossible. How dare someone so trivial bring forth danger to the entire Luvien Empire, right? Just with this power alone, he knew that it was possible to destroy the empire.

'What if... it's an illusion...?'

Nerva Sephiroth was a very clever and crafty ruler. He was able to see right through the crux of the matter. However, there was this fear that was lingering in his head.

'What if it is real? If so, then the princess will die.'

But everything would be over once he had a cup of tea with the Beyond the Heavens' King. Anyway, the man would be greatly honored to have a cup of tea with him. Besides, Nerva was sure that the man would be happy to forge friendly relations with the Luvien Empire.

Then, Knight Commander Don arrived to meet him. The problem was there was no Beyond the Heavens' King, the man that Nerva believed would come rushing once he called, in sight.

"Where is he?"

"..."

Don could not open his mouth. He could not bring himself to say what he wanted to say.

"Commander Don?! Where in the world is he?!!"

Knight Commander Don carefully recalled the words that the man said as he slowly answered Nerva, "He said that he was afraid that he would not be able to meet with you right now since he is a bit busy."

Nerva Sephiroth, the absolute being under the care of the Battle God, sprang to his feet. "W, what...?! That's ridiculous...!"

How dare he refuse the emperor's request? Was he truly a crazy bastard?! That was when Nerva realized that this was the man's way of mocking him for trampling on his pride before.

'What if the man truly has something urgent to deal with?'

Nerva had to calm his anger down first and ask, "What was the reason? Why did he say that he could not come?"

Donn stuttered, trying to spit out the words that the man had conveyed to him, "He said... Chi... e..."

No matter how hard Don tried, even if his face had already turned red, he still could not spit the words out properly.

The emperor asked him again, "What is it?"

Don still kept his mouth shut. He had always been cautious and careful with the things that he did. But now, he had no choice but to close his eyes and say those words loudly. "...I'm busy eating chicken. Your Majeeeeeesty!!!"

"..."

Nerva Sephiroth was left speechless for a moment. And he, who had always presented himself with courtesy and manners ended up spitting out strings of curses.

Chapter 699: The Ten Plagues

Rumbleeeeeeeee—

Clack, clack, clack, clack—

Lost in his thoughts, Nerva Sephiroth's expression was dark amidst the sound of hail and fireballs crashing on the castle roofs.

Griiiiip—

'How dare the king of such a small nation...'

Nerva had asked Minhyuk to have a cup of tea. However, he was rejected by the man because Minhyuk 'had to eat chicken'.

Nerva was filled with pride. As the emperor appointed by the Battle God, he firmly believed that he was the only man that could rule this land. But, a mere foreigner king was showing contempt toward him. Still, the anger that he felt only boiled for a brief moment.

[The Eighth Plague.]

[A plague of locusts will descend and devour everything.]

"Your Majesty!!!"

The servants rushed inside. When he followed them outside, Nerva saw a sea of locusts engulfing the entire Luvien Empire.

"...They're eating all of our crops."

"We're already suffering from food shortage as it is."

"..."

Nerva groaned.

'There is an epidemic going around and even all of the water sources have turned into blood, yet there are still no casualties.'

Even their livestock were dying, yet no one had died from starvation.

'This is obviously an illusion!'

Even though he thought that everything was nothing but an illusion, he still feared the coming of the Tenth Plague. What if the warning from the dreary voice about him 'losing the one that he cherishes the most' turned out to be true?

"What about the princess?"

"She has developed a fever and even her coughs have gotten worse."

“...”

Nerva turned nervous. However, the Beyond the Heavens' King had opted to ignore his summons. He was trapped between a rock and a hard place.

[The Ninth Plague.]

[Pitch-black darkness will cover everything.]

In a situation where there were infectious diseases running rampant, insects infesting everything, as well as hail and fireballs falling from the sky, the sudden plunge into pitch-black darkness of the entire Luvien Empire heightened the fear in everyone.

Even Nerva started to grow uneasy. He quickly ran to see the princess, only to see the child that he loved dearly hacking from the cough that plagued her as cold sweat dripped down her body.

“Father...”

The other princes were not allowed to refer to Nerva Sephiroth as ‘father’. They had always been ordered to call him ‘Your Majesty’. The princess was the only exception. Nerva only allowed her to call him father. Nerva Sephiroth was still a human after all.

“Don’t worry too much. You have been looking quite emaciated these past few days.”

Nerva’s complexion turned pale after seeing the princess, who was still in cold sweat, worrying about him.

[The final disaster will soon fall upon these lands.]

Once again, that unidentified and dreary voice rang loudly.

The ‘Bird that Flies a Thousand Miles’ flew at the speed of light to deliver the parchment it was carrying to all races and places all throughout the continent. The parchment carried the figure of a black dragon ascending to the heavens. The symbol was of the sender of the letter, Black Dragon.

Ruth hurriedly accepted the parchment and delivered it to Her Majesty Ellie, who carefully pored over the contents of the chuunibyou-like parchment.

For unverified letters, Ruth would read them first before passing them on to Her Majesty Ellie. He could not help but recall the contents of the parchment that he received earlier.

[Black Dragon is gathering people.]

[He is gathering people that will deliver a huge blow to the Luvien Empire.]

[He has named the group that will be formed through this as ‘Team Darkness’.]

[Black Dragon has given a codename that suited those that will gather under the banner of this team the most.]

[Ellie’s codename will be: Red Flame Swordsman.]

‘Her Majesty will be called Red Flame Swordsman... Goodness, he gave the Continental Emperor the codename Red Flame Swordsman?!’

Aide Ruth felt his cheeks burn from embarrassment. It sounded like the codename of someone that shouted, *'Take this! This is the Flaming Sword of Justice!!!'* or something like that. The thought alone made Ruth's face turn red. Ellie, on the other hand, remained silent after reading the parchment.

'Maybe Her Majesty is feeling embarrassed too? That's why she's not speaking?'

Ellie just walked slowly and headed out toward the ramparts. The moonlight shone brightly over Ellie and the peaceful Eivelis Empire. Under the light of the moon, one could see the small flush on her cheeks and the slight tremble of her body.

'She's really too shy to speak. She's even tearing up from the embarrassment...'

Was that how a person looked like if they were too embarrassed? Then, Ellie opened her mouth. "Ruth..."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Red Flame Swordsman."

There was a tremble in Ellie's voice as she looked up at the bright moon. Ruth, who watched his empress like that, thought he understood her feelings completely.

"It's too..."

'That's right. She must be so embarrassed...'

"Doesn't it sound so cool?"

"???"

"In the name of Team Darkness, I am the Red Flame Swordsman."

"???"

"It sounds like the name of someone that can burn the world with just a single strike of their sword, no? I feel more satisfied with this name, more so than the name Continental Emperor."

"Your... Your Majesty?"

"How should I appear so that I will look cooler? Will it sound cooler if I say, *'Burn with my sword of flames!'* when I appear once the Masserati Kingdom is in danger?"

'N, no... Your Majesty...?'

"I really can't help but admire Black Dragon's naming sense once again. He's really a genius. I should consult with him about the name of our next knight order."

'...'

The words that Minhyuk told him in the past flashed in Ruth's head.

—Ellie-noona is a member of 'Gremory and the Attention Seekers'. Please pay attention and be careful, Sir Aide.

Only then did Ruth realize that those words were true.

Then, Ellie, with a very grave look on her face, murmured, “How... how should I make my appearance more splendid... Hoo...”

“...”

At the same time.

The ‘Bird that Flies a Thousand Miles’ had arrived in another kingdom. It was the Lumae Kingdom, a small nation yet it had the power that was comparable to the power of a considerably large empire.

These days, Prince Votto had been very worried about his father. ‘*Father...*’

Once in a while, his father, King Raldo, would recall the past.

—Son, these days I keep on remembering the battle back then.

Back then, his father was given the codename: Absolute Strongest Uncle Red Dragon, and played an active role in the war. The thrill of that day was something that King Raldo could never forget. There were even times when he would say that he felt like his mouth and hands were itching to do something and that he could not stand it.

“My father received a mysterious letter?”

Prince Votto immediately rushed to where his father was. There, he saw his father, King Raldo, sitting on his throne and shedding tears as he read the letter in his hands.

King Raldo was a legend that built the Lumae Kingdom up from the ground, making it a nation that no other small nation or kingdom could ever dare touch so easily. He was also considered as the strongest existing king in Asgan Continent and stood among the ranks of the Absolute Supreme NPCs.

However, that very same Raldo was weeping. When Raldo and the knights entered with a concerned look on their faces, he just turned to the window and smiled at the moonlight that shone through the windows.

“The day has finally come. They said that they’re gathering people again. And the name of the team this time is even better than before.”

“F, father...?”

“Team Darkness. Isn’t it such a noble and majestic name? Just like that name of the night sky, no?!!”

“D, dad...?”

“Your Majesty...!”

Raldo suddenly covered his face with his large hand, laughter escaping through his mouth.

“Fufufufu. Votto, if you hear the codename that I received this time, you will also want to join Team Darkness.”

“Absolutely, absolutely not! Never!!!”

“The name given to me this time is Darksword. The Darksword that will leave its mark in the annals of history. Fuhahahahahaha!!!”

Prince Votto’s face turned ugly. He looked like he wanted to cry.

‘D, dad. Please...’

Beyond the Heavens’ Vice Guild Master Genie walked out while thinking, *‘Only a few people should go as reinforcements to the?Masserati?Kingdom. Since the public is still in chaos after the war, we should not send many troops.’*

If they did that, the people would just grow uneasy. Genie sent a whisper to Minhyuk regarding this concern. Thankfully, Minhyuk sent a whisper back swiftly.

Gremory and the Attention Seekers? It was a very strange name. However, Genie still decided to go and see Black Dragon just in case something was amiss.

When she arrived in front of Black Dragon’s house, she saw that the door was already open.

“Huh...?”

Genie stepped inside and saw how unique the house was. To put it in other words, it was very much in his style. Even the gloomy feeling was up to point. At the same time, Black Dragon’s voice rang from deep within the house.

[Come in.]

Genie chased after the sound of the voice and was promptly left speechless by the sight. Britney was curled up in front of Black Dragon while Breaker had his arms wrapped gently around him. Black Dragon giggled as the four dragons surrounded him.

“I’m well aware what Miss Genie is worried about.”

‘Father...’

At this point, they should have already gotten used to Chairman Kang Minhoo’s preferences. However, Genie just could not bring herself to get used to it.

Black Dragon laughed as he continued to speak with his gloomy voice, “All of the members of Team Darkness have agreed to my proposal.”

“I, I see. That’s a relief.”

Genie could see that Black Dragon already had another guest. This guest was none other than Ascar. After her transfer to the Absolute Demigod Class, she had become one of the strong pillars of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Black Dragon turned to look at Ascar and said, “As I was saying before, God of the Battlefield, your mission is to use that ‘voice’, that can even show contempt to the gods, and let the world know of the splendid appearance of the members of Team Darkness.”

“...Yes,” Ascar answered. She looked like she wanted to cry.

Genie easily interpreted those words, *‘So, to put it simply... Once Gremory and the Attention Seekers appear, ‘Scar will use her ‘God’s Voice’ and help them make a more splendid appearance...?’*

Ascar turned to look at Genie, with an unmistakable look in her eyes.

‘Genie... please help me...’

‘S, ‘Scar...’

Goodness, the only Absolute Demigod Class, Asura Ascar, had turned into Black Dragon’s ‘God of Voice’ shuttle!!!

“Fufufufu.?Keuhahahahahahahahaha!!! The slumbering being on my right arm is already going crazy from the activities that we’re about to partake in!!! *Keuhahahahahahahahaha!!!”*

“...”

“...”

Genie and Ascar both wanted to cry at this moment.

Minhyuk had received a whisper from Genie.

He nodded. This was something that he already expected. The Gremory and the Attention Seekers that he knew would most definitely appear in this battle. After all, they would surely attract attention here.

Meanwhile, he was feeling restless.

‘I heard news that the princess had contracted a sickness at this time but...’

The illusion of the disaster would only appear once the plague had been announced. In other words, the princess’ sickness was not something that Minhyuk was involved in, since the Tenth Plague had not yet arrived.

Basically, the princess was truly sick.

‘Is he not going to do anything even though I sent them back?’

Minhyuk had sent the servants back to Nerva to humiliate him. At the same time, the quest ‘A Cup of Tea with Nerva Sephiroth’ had changed to ‘Nerva’s Move’. It was a quest where he had to make Nerva, the emperor of the great Luvien Empire, make a move on his own. If Nerva would not personally come here, then Minhyuk might actually incur plenty of damages with how he acted afterward.

Minhyuk decided to check the situation outside first. So, he opened the door, only to be shocked. It was because Emperor Nerva’s pale face greeted him. The man was just about to knock on the door when he was suddenly met with Minhyuk’s eyes, his hands forced to stop.

“...”

And what did Minhyuk do? It was simple.

Grin—

One side of his mouth curled up into a smirk.

Chapter 700: The Ten Plagues

Who was Nerva Sephiroth? He played the most important role in Athenae’s second era. He was one of the absolute beings that the Battle God had chosen to descend to earth to lead an army that was so powerful that even several empires combined would not be able to win against them.

As such, Nerva Sephiroth was very prideful and arrogant. However, he was currently sporting a very pale look on his face. His hands that were about to knock on the door paused in mid-air when Minhyuk suddenly appeared in front of him.

[Nerva Sephiroth is the emperor of the Luvien Empire. It is very unusual for him to make the move first.]

[Please coordinate with Nerva Sephiroth for your rewards.]

Minhyuk caught a glimpse of the hundreds of escort knights and soldiers that were standing behind Nerva, a scene that prompted a confused expression on his face.

“Why did Your Majesty come to this shabby place?”

“Didn’t you want to have a cup of tea with me?”

Minhyuk turned to look inside the house. He acted as if he was busy with something. Simply put, he was disregarding Emperor Nerva’s presence right in front of him. However, Nerva still held his anger back.

“Please come inside.”

Minhyuk first allowed Nerva inside while glancing at the troops stationed outside.

“Knights, stay on standby.”

“...Yes, Your Majesty.”

The only ones that entered the house were Minhyuk and Nerva.

Minhyuk quickly served some chamomile tea. “You look quite anxious and restless. Chamomile has a calming effect and can soothe the mind and the body. Please have some.”

He had clearly heard that the rewards that he would receive would depend on the deal that they would make here.

“The empire seems quite noisy these past few days?” Minhyuk thus began his act.

“...I will be straightforward with you. Stop these disasters right now.”

The moment Minhyuk arrived, disaster fell upon their empire. Nerva was convinced that he was the cause, especially after hearing that sly undertone in his voice.

Of course, Minhyuk sported a confused expression on his face. “Stop the disasters?”

Nerva was currently very anxious and tense. What if something went wrong with the princess?

“If something happens to the princess, I will not let the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom go. Your kingdom will not be safe.”

That was the truth. If Nerva made up his mind, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would disappear from the map in just a week. The Luvien Empire could also give quests to other players and get them to help destroy the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

“Why are you suddenly besmirching Beyond the Heavens?” Minhyuk asked, his gaze turning fierce.

Nerva grabbed the cup of tea presented to him and stared at Minhyuk.

“...”

The overwhelming killing intent that poured out from Nerva’s body made Minhyuk feel breathless. Minhyuk could not help but be surprised. After all, the air around them had completely turned sharp from the man’s killing intent.

‘Just how strong is Nerva?’

Nerva Sephiroth was not just a simple emperor. He was someone that was recognized by the Battle God. Even his climb to the throne was very unusual. Minhyuk was certain that Nerva was a very powerful man, someone that he could not win against.

“Is it because this emperor has wronged you? Forgive us for letting you live in a place like this. To tell you the truth, there’s not enough room for distinguished guests of the imperial family.” Nerva suddenly remembered his current situation and instantly erased the killing intent that he was releasing.

“I promise you, the Beyond the Heavens’ King, if you feel like you have been wronged, then I will make sure to compensate you for it.”

“I don’t know what in the world you’re talking about. What do you mean by stopping the disasters? And what do you mean by compensating me? This is making me uneasy,” Minhyuk said, shaking his head while sporting a miserable expression.

“Not too long ago, many of our people and soldiers had died because of the army that the God of Death had sent and the vicious and heinous group that aided them.”

“...”

Nerva was aware that those words were aimed at him.

“I feel bitter resentment toward those people. And I will make sure to show those that did this to us what kind of power we have.”

“The God of Death is not some kind of pushover.”

“But I cannot back down on this. On another note, you have told me that you will compensate me. However, I do not know what you mean. But if I dare ask you...”
Minhyuk looked back up and made eye contact with Nerva.

‘He’s different.’

At that moment, Nerva realized that the man in front of him was different from the kings and the puppets that inherited the throne from previous emperors, the ones that licked the path that he walked on and kissed his shoes. Nerva even felt a bit of admiration for him at this moment.

‘He is a talent that can become an emperor.’

Perhaps he might reach a greater height than Continental Emperor Ellie. That was when Nerva felt a bit of fear. If Ellie and this man cooperated and combined their strength while still growing, it might be impossible for him to devour the entire continent.

Whether he knew what Nerva was thinking or not, Minhyuk said, “I’m not asking for too much, Your Majesty Nerva. I just want to appease my kingdom and the families of the bereaved that were affected by the war.”

His first demand was gold.

“The war has also made us lose and break a lot of our weapons. It is to the point that we have to import a lot from the other nations.”

His second demand was artifacts from the Luvien Empire, an empire that was overflowing with such things.

“Ah. From what I heard, you are holding plenty of prisoners inside the Luvien Empire’s underground prison, is that true? If some of my people are there then...”

“...”

Nerva did not even bother to answer.

The third demand was the release of the prisoners of war from the underground prison.

“Also, I’ve heard that the Luvien Empire has plenty of interesting ingredients.”

“...?”

Nerva was confused, wondering if he heard correctly.

“You know, that ingredient where you can get either fruits, vegetables, or even meat? The ingredient that would make someone grow stronger if they eat the product produced after planting? What was it called? ‘Seed of Growth’...?”

“...!”

Nerva’s eyes grew wide. *‘How, how did he know about the Seed of Growth?’*

The Seed of Growth was something that Nerva Sephiroth had obtained as a reward from the Battle God after he had made another achievement. It was a ‘God-grade’ ingredient.

However, the most surprising thing about this ingredient was the fact that it could increase the potential of the being that consumed it. However, it would have no other effects for those that were already normally strong.

What would happen if a soldier consumed such an ingredient? The seed could identify if that person had the desire and passion to get strong. Also, if that person was talented but was not strong, it would promote a higher growth in potential.

‘It has the power to turn an ordinary soldier into a legend of this era.’

Nerva, who acquired this seed just a few days ago, was actually looking for a person to feed it.

The reason why Minhyuk knew about it was because of his ‘Ingredient Search’ skill, which would automatically search for cooking ingredients within a one kilometer radius.

‘I even walked around the castle grounds on purpose for this.’

Nerva pondered deeply for a very long time. This seed was also very valuable to him. After he finished thinking, he said, “Can your Beyond the Heavens Kingdom handle this?”

“...Isn’t that something that we’ll only know if we try it?”

“Interesting.”

Nerva smiled. Once this deal was concluded, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would openly become the enemy of the Luvien Empire. This was because they had made their presence firmly known to Nerva Sephiroth.

“I will send gifts to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in the form of gold, treasures and artifacts.”

[Nerva Sephiroth has promised to give you 5,000 platinum as a gift!]

[Nerva Sephiroth has promised to give you 20,000 weapons, 30,000 armor, and 5,000 accessories!]

“I also promise to release the prisoners of war being held in the underground prison.”

[You can now enter the Luvien Empire’s prisons and bring the prisoners of war out!]

“I will also give you this Seed of Growth.

[You have acquired the Seed of Growth!]

Nerva held out a handkerchief bearing the symbol of their empire to Minhyuk. This handkerchief contained the Seed of Growth.

Minhyuk smiled lightly once he received it. This was his victory.

But before Nerva stepped out, he said, "Everything comes at a price."

"..."

Minhyuk knew what it meant. One way or another, the Luvien Empire would make sure to make them pay for this. Perhaps the destruction of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would even be sped up. Still, Minhyuk could not resist having one last jab.

"Ah. Please do have some chicken with me sometime. It's delicious."

"...!"

Nerva's face turned red as he hurried out of the room.

Thud!!!

The doors finally closed.

After receiving the Seed of Growth, Minhyuk pondered deeply, *'I have to find someone loyal. They should not be strong yet, but they must have the skills and will give their all. I need someone like that.'*

Deep underground the Luvien Empire's Imperial Castle was a prison. Its cells were filled with prisoners of war from several kingdoms and empires.

As the Luvien Empire wanted to dig out the secrets that they knew, the means of torture that these prisoners underwent were extremely terrible. There were even cases where some had their eyes gouged out.

In this underground prison, there was a soldier stripped down to his underwear and shivering fiercely from the cold, while countless prisoners were dying around him. All of the soldier's nails and even his toenails had been pulled out. This soldier was none other than the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's soldier, Nero.

Nero was born with a weak body. However, despite his condition, he never neglected a day of exercise and had always walked the proper path when learning, in order to become a soldier.

He had always been grateful to Beyond the Heavens' King Minhyuk. *'I will never forget it.'*

The people of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were not starved. No, they used to starve but not anymore.

Soldier Nero's house had been shabby and dilapidated and they used to starve. Then one day, his mother grew sick. Unfortunately, he did not even have the money to make porridge for her. At that time, the Beyond the Heavens' soldiers knocked on their door and gave them a bag of flour.

On that day, a royal decree was passed down. It said that there would no longer be hungry and starving people in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Nero hugged the bag of flour and wept bitterly. That was the day that he decided to become a soldier.

Nero trained and practiced hard, and grew to become a skilled, competent soldier. However, war came and he was dragged into it.

“Shall we start again?”

The prison guards appeared, slowly approaching him with iron rods heated in fire.

A while ago, some of the imperial guards came and went to this place to torture them. It was a very long and painful time to the point that the others had already fainted in the middle. There were even some of them that shouted ‘I’ll tell you!’. But the guards continued to torture them. That was why Nero was sure that they were just doing this for fun.

“Tell us the secrets of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Where is the secret passage to the kingdom?”

Nero, who was curled up in the corner and trembling from the cold, saw the reddish and hot rod that was coming his way. The pain of getting his nails pulled out was already unbearable, he shuddered to think what would happen if he got stabbed with such a thing.

“...I don’t know.”

“Hmmm.”

The guard looked at Nero pensively as he continued to torture and abuse his body. All Nero could do was clench his teeth and endure the pain.

“Heuk! Ugh!”

Tears poured down from his eyes, his consciousness and rationality slipping further away from him as the smell of burnt flesh and the smoke of the hot rod invaded his nose.

“Are you ready to talk?” The guard asked him with an evil grin.

Nero breathed roughly as he firmly shook his head. “I... don’t... know!!!”

Sizzleeeeeeee—

“Graaaaaaaack!”

Nello’s torture was endless, his skin getting burned all over. In the end, the guards began to resort to breaking his fingers.

“Urk!!!”

At that moment, the conversation that he had with the other prisoners of wars came to mind.

—You might as well give up those secrets. No emperor or king would care about us anyway. All of us here have been abandoned.

—That’s right. We’re already abandoned. Besides, the empire has promised us riches if we spill the secrets, right?

—I’ll choose to confess.

Indeed, there was no king or emperor that would care about their people that had already been captive and turned to prisoners of war.

—*We are nothing but tools for war.*

With the promise of wealth and riches, most of the captives had decided to betray their nations. But that was not the case for the soldiers of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

—*Even if our king doesn't come.*

—*He will still be our one and only true king, the king that fought for us.*

So, Nero endured.

“I have never seen such a tough and stubborn guy as this.”

“He hasn’t even passed out.”

In the end, one of the guards dragged Nero’s body out and started another round of torture, this time much terrible than before.

Sizzleeee—

“Ugh, aaaaaaack! Uwaaaaaaaaaack! Keuaaaaaaack! Keheooooook!”

It was so terrible that the only thing that could come out of Nero’s mouths were groans and screams of pain. The worst part of this was the trauma inflicted on the mind. Still, Nero endured everything.

“This bastard is no fun. Let’s just kill him and do the same to the other bastards.”

“...”

The sound of death loomed upon him as the sword got dragged out of its scabbard and was placed over his neck. It renewed the fear in Nero. He had always wanted to become stronger so that he could become a knight, so that he could cut down his enemies. To become one of the strong of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and gaze at his king, Minhyuk, from afar. What would he say? Those were the thoughts that flashed in Nero’s head as he watched the blade come nearer.

In the end, Nero could only close his eyes tightly as he shouted the words that had been raging in his heart. “Be... Be...”

“Be? Be... what?”

“Long live... Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...”

“This f*cking bastard...”

“Your... Majesty... Minhyuk... may you live long!!!” Nero squeezed out the last of his strength and shouted as loud as he could.

The guards giggled as they held the sword to his neck, digging into his flesh. But Nero kept his eyes shut, the only thought running through his head, ‘*Your Majesty... I hope... I hope... that you live a long and healthy life...*’

At that moment, a cold voice rang out.

“Do not touch this king’s people.”

Baaaaaaaang—

The guard was sent flying back, his head stuck in the wall opposite Nero.

Thud—

Everyone saw the man glaring sharply and coldly at the falling guard, and were shocked.

“Your, Your Majesty...!”

“Your Majesty Minhyuk!!!”

“Your Majeeeeeestyyyy!!!”

The prisoners of war from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom cried out loudly, their heads bowing deeply toward the man. As for the other prisoners of war from the other kingdoms and empires, they were all looking incredulously at the scene.

‘The, the king of a nation personally came here to save the prisoners of war?’

‘He did not send his men but he came personally?’

At that moment, the same thought flashed in their heads: *I wish the emperor and king that we serve is just like him.* They also realized why the Beyond the Heavens’ soldiers did not give in and kept their mouths shut.

“I’m sorry everyone. I came late.”

“Your Majesty!!! Your Majeeeeeestyyyy!!!”

Their howls and cries filled the entire underground prison. Although Nero could only open one eye from how swollen they were, he slowly looked up. There, he saw His Majesty, the one and only king that he served. His king, whose eyes were shining brightly through his black hair, placed his warm and large hands on Nero’s shoulder.

“Thank you.”

Nero felt warm tears well up in his eyes. Then, an even more shocking statement was spoken.

“Nero, let’s go home. Your mother is waiting for you.”

“...Your Majesty.”

...Minhyuk, who commanded hundreds of thousands of troops, remembered his name.

“Sob, sob, sob, sob, sob!”

Minhyuk, who saw Nero crying, spoke kindly, “Nero, will you come back with me and become my knight?”

It was at this moment that Minhyuk had decided on who the owner of the Seed of Growth would be.

Nero replied, tears dripping down his face, “...Yes.”

This was the start of the bond between Minhyuk, who would become the emperor in the future, and Beyond the Heavens' Moon Nero, who would become his shadow.