

Gourmet 721

Chapter 721: Venteio

PD Kim Daeguk understood the reason for the numerous mercenaries that had gathered.

‘With Venteio becoming the God of Mercenaries, those that were being chased down by the Luvien Empire have gathered here.’

They had all gained hope, and believed that they would now be able to fight against the Luvien Empire with Venteio leading them.

As their new master in this new world, Venteio opened his mouth and spoke heavily to the millions of mercenaries that were kneeling on one knee in front of him. “The Luvien Empire is persecuting us under the guise of a mercenary hunt.”

Everyone held their breath as they focused on Venteio’s words.

“Perhaps, just like in the past, countless of our comrades might die or be used as tools.”

Resentment and determination flashed in their eyes as they continued to gaze at Venteio.

“But... are you going to run away?”

No. No longer. Because Venteio was now standing in front of them. Now, they had the courage and confidence to fight against the empire. They took their weapons and slammed them on the ground, their voices ringing loudly in the area.

Thump! Thump!

“Venteio!”

“Venteio!”

“Perhaps we’ll have to hide like fugitives and die fighting to protect our pride until the very end. But isn’t it fine?”

Thump! Thump!

“Venteio!”

“Venteio!”

“Nevertheless, it will be glorious and honorable. The fact that we will fight for our pride until the very end will definitely make its mark in history!!!”

Thump! Thump!

“Venteio!”

“Venteio!”

“Right here and now, I declare war. We will fight for our Mercenary’s Pride. We will take arms and punish those that try to suppress us!” Venteio pulled out his bloody sword and raised it high to the sky.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Venteio! Venteio! Venteio!”

Their loud roars shook the heavens and the earth.

ATV Broadcasting Station’s PD Kim Daeguk could not help but gulp dryly at the sight.

‘The man that rules and commands the top ten mercenary corps in the world.’

Even if the Mercenary Kings ruled over the mercenaries, based on the articles recorded in history, there was only one Mercenary King that had received the support of all the top ten mercenary corps in the world. It was none other than the man that they hailed as the Mercenary Emperor. Now, another person like that had made an appearance.

“S, Sir... Our viewership ratings have surpassed 27%!”

PD Kim felt his lips turn dry when he saw Mercenary King Venteio turn his head back and look inside the palace. Everyone knew that the person that would come out of that place and appear in this situation was none other than the player that contributed greatly in helping Venteio sit on his throne.

Who was the player that helped Venteio become the Mercenary King? After all, the Mercenary King was supported by the top ten mercenary corps in the world, along with over two million mercenaries that were present here!

“Our viewership ratings have gone over 30%! Meanwhile, the ratings of the Rothschild Kingdom’s founding ceremony have dropped by around 5%!”

PD Kim’s hands were filled with sweat.

“Let me introduce to you the one that helped me defend our pride.”

Everyone turned nervous as their eyes focused behind Venteio. Who the hell helped Venteio become the Mercenary King?

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

The sound of footsteps rang amidst the pin drop silence. The viewers, commentators, broadcasting officials, and even the world rankers that were tuned in, were all staring intently, waiting to see who the person was.

What greeted them was a 1.85m-tall, fair-skinned, young man with soft and gentle eyes, a straight nose and sharp jawline, framed by his neat black hair. He was none other than Minhyuk.

“The, the viewership ratings have exceeded 35%! It’s starting to increase at a rapid pace! 36%! 37%, 38%! We have reached 40%!!!”

“Food, Food God...”

“Isn’t that Minhyuk?”

“The Beyond the Heavens’ King...”

The entire world was in a huge uproar. However, they all noticed something off. Minhyuk’s expression was sullen, when they were supposed to be celebrating a glorious and thrilling occasion.

‘Why does he look so sullen?’

Everyone watching the broadcast in one of the meeting rooms of Joy Co. Ltd. knew the reason why.

Kang Taehoon chuckled. “He’s sullen because Venteio did not give him the dish, right?”

“That’s probably the case. It’s just like Player Minhyuk.”

Indeed. Minhyuk had yet to receive the rewards from Venteio. There was also the dish that the God of Mercenaries had bestowed upon Venteio! No, perhaps he would not be able to get it. After all, the reward section of the quest did say ‘???’.

Even with Minhyuk acting all sullen like that, the entire world was still envious of him. Especially after hearing Venteio say, “I promise you, the Beyond the Heavens’ King, that I will run to you when you call for it, or whenever you are in danger.”

[Mercenary King Venteio promises the Beyond the Heavens’ King Minhyuk that he will run to his aid!]

Even so, Minhyuk still had a sullen expression on his face. He tried not to show it, he really did! However, it was very hard to hide the disappointment that he was feeling.

Then, all of the cameras took a close-up of Venteio and Minhyuk. Venteio grinned at Minhyuk. At the same time, a mercenary appeared behind Minhyuk carrying what seemed to be an item that was wrapped in golden cloth.

Venteio said, “Didn’t you ask me before if we could be friends?”

Since all of the cameras were zoomed in to them, they did not miss the conversation between the two. Goodness! Minhyuk was on an entirely different level to ask the Mercenary King to be his friend!

Minhyuk nodded slowly. However, Venteio shook his head.

“...!”

“...!”

Everyone was shocked. He did not want to be friends? As expected, it was very difficult to make friends with a big-shot like Venteio. Perhaps he thought that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was beneath him?

But then, Venteio said, “How about a brotherly relationship? You can call me hyung. After all, I’m twenty years older than you.”

However, the sullen look on Minhyuk’s face did not disappear. The entire world that watched this scene were all shocked.

[My god. I don't know the reason why but Minhyuk just nodded with a sullen look on his face even though Venteio is suggesting that they have a brotherly relationship.]

[I don't understand either. He's going to take Venteio as his hyung but... no. As long as he forges a friendly relationship with the Mercenary King then it would be like putting wings on the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, no?]

[I really don't get it.]

Then, the mercenary that appeared behind Minhyuk handed over the item wrapped in golden cloth. The moment he checked the item, the sullen and gloomy look on his face instantly disappeared, replaced by a bright and happy smile.

With a charming voice, Minhyuk called out, "Venteio hyuuuuuuung~?"

"...?"

"...?"

[...?]

[...?]

What was this change of attitude? It changed so fast it could be considered to be as fast 5G LTE!

"Hehe. Venteio hyung is so cool!" Minhyuk exclaimed coquettishly.

[Ahem, ahem. Anyway. Player Minhyuk now has Ellie noona, Uncle Raldo, and even Mercenary King Venteio hyung by his side.]

[I'm so jealous. A prett... no, a cool hyung buys him a good meal.]

The entire world was envious of Minhyuk, while the viewership ratings painted an impressive picture as well.

"PD Kim, we reached the highest rating at 44.1% today at the 'Venteio hyuuuuuuung~?' part!"

ATV Broadcasting Station had hit the jackpot once again.

Mercenary King Venteio had no reason to give Minhyuk the dish that the God of Mercenaries had bestowed upon him. All Brod had said was that the God of Mercenaries would bestow a very rare dish to the newly crowned Mercenary King.

However, Venteio clearly remembered the words that Brod told him before he disappeared completely.

—His Majesty gets very sensitive whenever he's hungry. He's probably very hungry right now.

Of course, Venteio understood the meaning of those words. Actually, this dish had the power to make the Mercenary King stronger. However, Venteio had already gained more strength after he became the God of Mercenaries' successor, so there was not a need for the dish.

Right now, this was the only thing that he could do for Minhyuk. After all, he and his mercenaries would have to live in hiding for a while. They had to move and change their territory somewhere that was far away from the empire's reach so that they could prepare for the desperate battle that awaited them.

However, although it was just a dish, Minhyuk still smiled brightly and innocently like a child when he saw it.

'Master. I think I understand why you care so much about him.' A warmth bloomed in Venteio's chest as he watched Minhyuk with the heart of an older brother.

After the inauguration ceremony ended, Minhyuk fidgeted, his eyes darting around. Venteio looked at him, nodding indulgently as he said, "Go ahead and eat it."

"Yes, hyung!" Minhyuk shouted as he unwrapped the golden cloth. However, what greeted him was a blast of steam that escaped from the seams of the lid, which was completely covering the contents of the pot.

Sniff, sniff—

Minhyuk's nose twitched. He knew this smell. He could recognize what it was. It was the dish that one would think of when they wanted some hot soup and good food to eat on a cold day, especially as one's hands had been frozen stiff after swinging a sword all day outside and their nose was running.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

When he opened the lid, the contents inside the pot that greeted him was none other than seafood kal-guksu[1].

"Hiyaaaa..."

Minhyuk could not help but gulp down the drool that threatened to drip down his chin as he looked at the glossy noodles, the zucchinis, the carrots, and the largely chopped green onions inside the pot. There were also mussels, shrimps, clams, and blue crabs floating inside that would definitely add a refreshing flavor to the soup.

Gulp—

Looking at the extremely appetizing dish in front of him, Minhyuk quickly made some fresh kimchi while placing some of it inside Gorac's Aging Jar. After a few minutes, he took out the now well-ripened kimchi and began to set the table. The best way to eat kal-guksu was to eat it with some mouth-watering, well-ripened kimchi, as well as some fresh kimchi.

Minhyuk first scooped some noodles on a small bowl before scooping out a ladle-full of soup.

"Ugh. So cold." Minhyuk lifted the small bowl of noodles to warm up his frozen body. Then, he blew on it lightly before slurping away.

"Sluuuuuuuuuuuurp!"

He felt very refreshed as the hot soup warmed up his frozen body. Then, he grabbed his chopsticks and clamped a mouthful of noodles and sucked them all up in one go! Minhyuk's cheeks bulged

from how full his mouth was. However, it did not stop him from admiring the chewy texture of the noodles. Of course, he did not forget to eat some of his fresh kimchi.

Crunch—

Since the kimchi was freshly made and had only been soaking in its seasoning for a short time, its flavor was not yet sour. It was the perfect complement to the noodles. The combination tasted divine in Minhyuk's mouth.

This time, Minhyuk took a bite of the knife-cut noodles along with a mouthful of soup.

Sluuuuuuuuurp—

Then, he took another sip of soup.

“Haaa—”

The deep and refreshing flavor of the soup was enough to warm one's heart. There was also the joy of taking out the meat of the mussels and clams one after another.

After he finished picking the meat of the shellfish, he placed them back in the soup. Then, he clamped another mouthful of noodles along with some of their meat.

Sluuuuuuuuurp—

“Kghhk...” A burst of admiration unknowingly escaped from his mouth.

After that, he ate some well-ripened kimchi with the noodles of the kal-guksu.

Crunch, crunch, crunch—

The taste of the well-ripened kimchi added to the flavor of the soup was like the icing on the cake. Minhyuk finished the contents of the pot in no time at all. He even lifted the entire pot and gulped everything down until the very last drop.

“Fwaaa!”

Venteio watched Minhyuk finish the dish with a happy smile on his face. While the notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears, Venteio approached him and said, “Ahem, ahem. Minhyuk, can you do this hyung of yours a favor?”

Haze was pondering deeply as she looked at the wide stretch of land in front of her. *‘We?have to expand our territory, even if it comes down to force.’*

The current population of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was quite large. They had already expanded their territory before, but they still had to expand even further and obtain various territories so they could create new attractions, develop new and wide hunting grounds for others to experience, as well as for the people that would move into their kingdom in the future.

There was actually a notorious hunting ground in the vicinity of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. It was called Akkravo, a land that they planned to pioneer.

Many people from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had devoted their blood, sweat and tears to try and pioneer the land. However, Akkravo was a land where strong monsters regularly appeared.

If these monsters were taken out of the equation, Akkravo was a very fertile land where the sun shone brightly on. In other words, it would be a perfectly good land to live in.

They also had another problem. Even if they decided to move some of their people there, the population was not enough to fill Akkravo. When establishing a new territory, one had to build several buildings, markets, and various other facilities.

Although the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had a huge population, a huge chunk of that was made up of ‘players’. In comparison, the number of their NPCs was remarkably small.

In the case of players, they could attract them with sweet offers of artifacts and cooking quests given by the Food God. They were also attracted by the huge number of rankers in their kingdom. However, for the NPCs, they did not feel the need to have those.

“If things continue like this, perhaps we should just give up on Akkravo?”

As mentioned before, Akkravo was teeming with strong monsters. In other words, if they established a territory here, they would be frequently attacked by these monsters. That meant that they had to have people capable of defending against them. Also, they could only deploy soldiers if there were plenty of people. Otherwise, it would be a waste of manpower if they deployed soldiers in a place that was inhabited by a very small population.

“Ugh...”

Haze, who was pondering deeply over their next course of actions, heard something from one of the foreigner executives.

“Minhyuk will be coming back soon.”

“Is that so?”

Haze was delighted to hear that His Majesty was coming back.

‘Did he succeed in befriending Venteio?’

Haze was not aware of the happenings since she had been stuck in this place for a long time, watching the situation.

‘Did he die...?’

What if Venteio died? If that happened, then His Majesty would definitely be heartbroken. After all, their goal was to befriend Venteio, not the Mercenary King.

But then, at that moment, something happened.

Rumbleeeeeeee—

“...?!”

Haze’s eyes grew wide as the ground beneath her feet started to shake and tremble. “Don’t tell me...”

Were Akkravo’s strong monsters going to launch a combined attack now? If that was the case, they would be in trouble. The number of soldiers that accompanied Haze right now was not large enough.

“Around seven? No, eight thousand...?”

She listened to the sound of footsteps, but still did not understand. However, she still ordered the soldiers to prepare for battle.

“We have to check the situation first then return quickly.”

They had to at least check the number of monsters before retreating.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

A thick cloud of dust was kicked up as the visitors approached them. To their pleasant surprise and relief, the one that appeared in front of them was none other than Minhyuk.

“Haaaaaaaaaaaaazzzzzzeeeeeee!!!” Minhyuk shouted, his hands waving widely above him.

Haze looked at Minhyuk in confusion. “Your, Your Majesty, the people behind you...?”

There were around 9,000 people, perhaps even more, behind Minhyuk.

“They’re the mercenaries’ families. Venteio asked me to take them. Ah. There are around one thousand skilled mercenaries among them. From today on, they will move to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.”

“...!”

—Please accept and take in the family members of the mercenaries. They have nowhere to go. Since the mercenaries need to fight a lonely battle for a very long time, we need someone to protect their families. I will send a few mercenaries with them to help out.

As it happened, the favor that Venteio asked him was about taking care of the family of the mercenaries that would be fighting in the war that they declared on the Luvien Empire.

With the number of people that Minhyuk brought over, it would be very easy for them to turn Akkravo into their territory and settle down in the area.

Haze was quickly struck by the realizations of what had happened.

‘His Majesty said that he would just build a friendly relation with Venteio, but he came back with almost 10,000 people?’

‘Venteio became the God of Mercenaries’ successor and became the leader that all of the mercenaries in the continent will follow?’

But it did not end there.

‘And he also formed a brotherly relationship with Mercenary King Venteio...?’

Haze could only bow down to His Majesty’s class and efficiency.

1. knife-cut noodles 🍝

Chapter 722: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

After Minhyuk returned to his kingdom, he finally had the time to check the effects of the dish that the God of Mercenaries had given. He had not been able to confirm it before because it had been so hectic.

[You have eaten the Seafood Kal-Guksu.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[This Seafood Kal-Guksu was given by the former Food God Allen as a gift to his trusted friend, the God of Mercenaries!]

[Your acquired rewards have grown better!]

The results were quite unexpected. Only then did he realize that it was also quite unusual that the God of Mercenaries would give dishes to the Mercenary King. It seemed like this opportunity was thanks to the help of the former Food God Allen.

Minhyuk had also acquired the Bizarre Cauldron from one of the previous Food Gods, Ravier. After receiving the item, he had immediately asked Abel to investigate Ravier and was able to gain information about him.

‘Food God Ravier is known as the greatest Food God in history.’

In fact, Ravier was not only the Food God, but also the God of Cooking. This meant that Allen was not the greatest. However, Minhyuk thought that although Allen was not the greatest, he was likely the most influential.

‘Food God Allen has a lot of friends and connections.’

Allen knew a ‘Continental Emperor’, a ‘Monster Lord’, even a ‘Continent’s Greatest Swordsman’. In fact, even the notifications that he just received showed that Food God Allen had a close relationship with the God of Mercenaries. There was a high chance that he still had other connections and they were just hidden.

Then, the notifications continued to ring in his ears.

[You have gained a 1.1% increase in all of your stats.]

[Your physical and magical attack and defense will increase by 5%.]

[Your resistance to abnormal status will increase by 10%.]

[Two of your skills will receive a one time enhancement effect. Searching for two of your skills!]

The effects of the seafood kal-guksu that Minhyuk knew before could only increase all of the attack and defense of the one that consumed it by 3%, as well as a 0.4% increase in all stats. It could also only increase the resistance to abnormal status by 7%. As for the last enhancement effect, it could only enhance one skill.

‘Isn’t this a huge boost?’

The unexpected, yet very welcome notifications brought a smile to Minhyuk’s face.

Ring!

Once the search was finished, he heard another set of notifications.

[Your skill: Everyone's Happiness has been enhanced to Level 9. This can only be used once.]

[The enhanced skill must be used within a week.]

'Oh...!'

Minhyuk was extremely happy. When he first acquired Everyone's Happiness, he also received the 'Food God's Praise', which allowed him to use the skill at Level 9 once. Back then, he surprised the world by creating as many as 10,000 clones of the dish that he made. This was a truly unexpected harvest. The only downside was the fact that he had to use it within a week.

'Where should I use it then?'

Finally, the search for the other skill had finished.

[Your skill: Sword of Absolute Death has been enhanced to Level 9. This can only be used once.]

[The enhanced skill must be used within a week.]

The Sword of Absolute Death was Minhyuk's strongest attack skill and was a skill that combined the Exploding Sword, the Heaven Tearing Sword, and the Sword of Tempest. The power that the Sword of Absolute Death at such an enhanced level could display would definitely be shocking. Especially since his usual Sword of Absolute Death could already slaughter hundreds to thousands of people in one go, as long as the enemies were gathered in one place.

Minhyuk looked very satisfied after looking at the effects that he received. Then, he called out to the empty space in front of him, "Luo."

"Yes, Your Majesty." Luo appeared behind him the moment he finished speaking.

"...?"

"...What's the matter?"

"No. I just tried to call you but you really appeared?"

Minhyuk was actually just imagining the scenes in the movies between the king and his shadow knight. It was unexpected that Luo actually appeared the moment he called him. From what he knew, Luo should still be teaching the soldiers in the training ground. So, it was shocking to see him suddenly appear here.

"It's one of the powers I possess."

"Ah..."

.

That was right. Luo had the 'Ghostly Arts' in his possession. Among the skills in the Ghostly Arts was one called 'Ghost's Stealth'. It was an amazing skill that could allow the skill user to choose one target. Once the target was chosen, the skill user would be able to hear their voice and move to where they were at any given moment. It was originally a skill used to kill their targets secretly. But its uses could also be changed and used in different, efficient manners.

"There's something I'm curious about."

“You can ask me anything.”

Minhyuk recalled Luo, as one of the Swords of the Gods, calling Brod the ‘Fallen Wretched Emperor.’ This made him curious about Brod. He was curious about Brod’s past, where he was, and what he was doing now.

Not too long ago, during the war in Masserati Kingdom, Minhyuk had summoned Brod after being subjected to the heavy onslaught of attacks from the Swords of the Gods. When Brod had appeared, he was already bloody and bruised. He even looked exhausted.

‘Was he training to become stronger?’

NPCs could also gain experience and grow stronger whenever they hunt stronger monsters. Especially for Brod. In Minhyuk’s eyes, Brod’s potential was limitless.

“What kind of person is Brod?”

“Sir Brod is...” Sword of the Gods Luo began to tell his tale.

There were two suns that existed in the sky, Absolute God’s Sword Brod and Absolute God’s Sword Nerva. The two had been fighting for the position of the Battle God for a very long time. At one point, both of them had already established their own empires, each of them reigning over their own lands in the Land of the Gods. Their empires were so strong that even the gods could only watch them by the sidelines.

‘Both empires were inhabited by humans.’

This was one thing that Minhyuk was certain about after looking through the information that he had gathered so far. When it came to their fighting strength on all fair terms, Nerva had always been behind Brod.

Finally, the day the final battle to determine who would become the next Battle God was decided. The battle was a scramble for Argard, a place located inside the Land of the Gods. The one that would come out victorious in this battle would become the Battle God’s Sword and descend upon earth to rule the world.

However, a day before the battle, Nerva had employed dirty tricks.

“He ordered the Swords of the Gods to kill Sir Brod’s knights that would compete with them.”

“...”

At those words, a shallow groan escaped Minhyuk’s mouth. He felt like his breathing had turned ragged as his hands clenched into fists.

“Were you there too?”

“...No, not at all.” Luo’s answer was brief. He also did not make any excuses. That alone was enough of an answer.

“Sir Brod was overcome with grief after seeing his entire knight order die. On that day, he gave up the competition and suddenly disappeared.”

Minhyuk nodded. This was probably the end of the story that Luo knew of. It must have been a long time before he met Brod again.

“How are the two of them?”

“Nerva is a very intelligent man. He is also someone that is well-versed in human behaviors. He is someone that knows what is the appropriate behavior to show to others more than anybody else. He is also someone that aspires to force all beings to prostrate and kneel by his feet.”

Minhyuk nodded once again.

“Sir Brod is also intelligent. However, he prefers to hang out and train with his men rather than fake his behavior and trick others. Because of his humanistic approach, many people followed him sincerely. Unlike Nerva, he dreamt of a world where all races lived in harmony. That was why he was fighting to become the Battle God’s Sword.”

“...Right.” Minhyuk nodded. The Brod that he knew was that kind of man. He was someone that would rather cry and laugh with others, than try to force them and show them who was superior.

“Is the reason why Brod is not staying here because he wants to become stronger?” Minhyuk looked out the window with a bitter look on his face.

Luo looked at him for a moment before shaking his head. “He’s not doing that to become stronger, Your Majesty.”

Minhyuk turned to Luo in doubt as he continued, “He’s doing it to protect you, Your Majesty.”

“...”

Minhyuk knew it well. Brod wanted to become stronger so he could protect him better. However, that was not what Luo meant.

“Your Majesty, there is no god that will be pleased if a human becomes a god. You must know that there were humans that became gods before too.”

Minhyuk also knew that. The gods that he met were all like that. They were petty bullies that tried to trample on the new gods and laugh at them.

“According to historical records, most of the humans that became gods would die within three years.”

“...!”

Minhyuk’s eyes grew wide as he focused on Luo.

“There was only one way for them to survive. They have to become a god that is powerful enough that even the other gods dare not touch them so easily.”

“An example should be Sword God Valen, no?”

“No. Sword God Valen is different. After sealing the entrance to the Demon World, Valen disappeared from the public view and lived as a ‘human’, not a ‘god’.”

It was probably just like Luo had said. It was more likely that Valen survived because he lived in seclusion and not because he was extremely strong.

“The humans that became gods could come and go between the earth and the Land of the Gods. However, when they are on earth, countless gods would send hardships and adversities toward them.”

Hardships and adversities? This meant that the gods would send their own apostles and envoys and allow them to use their own powers to kill those humans that became gods.

Minhyuk was very flustered. “What do you mean? The gods would send their apostles? I have never been attacked once...”

“Your Majesty,” Luo said, his voice calm and relaxed. “Sir Brod is stopping them for you.”

“...!”

Minhyuk felt his heart sink. To be honest, he resented Brod for leaving just like that. All he wanted was for him to stay by his side. But why was he not there? Of course, Brod was still as reliable as ever. He always showed up whenever he needed him and asked for his help to protect him.

All this time, Minhyuk thought that Brod left because he wanted to become stronger. No matter how much he wanted to become stronger to protect Minhyuk, there were still times when Minhyuk would think that it was a pity that he was not here by his side. But as it turned out, Brod did not leave simply because he wanted to become strong.

“He’s probably fighting against many gods in the Land of the Gods right now. As long as you’re here on earth, he is probably killing the apostles that the other gods sent. Their missions are to kill Your Majesty, destroy Your Majesty’s temple and priests, and slaughter Your Majesty’s kingdom and subjects.”

Luo’s words meant that Brod was doing this all by himself. The thought alone made Minhyuk’s heart throb in pain. Every time Brod appeared when he called for him, he would call out ‘Your Majesty’ with a kind and gracious smile. He did not even show any signs of having a hard time on his expression at all.

But he was fighting a lonely battle silently. Minhyuk was not even able to properly say ‘thank you’ to him.

“...Damn it.” Minhyuk clenched his fists tightly. “Luo, is there any way for me to help Brod?”

Minhyuk wanted to do something, anything. Whatever it was, he was willing to do so. As long as he could do something for Brod.

“Most of the knights that followed Sir Brod had died back then. However, there were a few that survived. They are now living under a different name.”

Minhyuk’s eyes had already turned bloodshot as he looked at Luo intently.

“The Sage’s Tower of Magic. The master of that place, the man named Andeiro. He once was Brod’s Mage Order’s Commander. Perhaps he knows of a way to help Brod out.”

At the same time.

A man wearing the tattered cape that carried the symbol of the fork and knife crossed together staggered as he stood in front of a warp gate, his body bloody. This warp gate was the gate that allowed anyone from the Land of the Gods to descend to earth.

For days on end, this man stood still and killed the armies and the apostles sent by those gods to target *him*. Hundreds of thousands of Divine Troops continued to charge at him and pressure him. But he still stood tall.

Even one of the Absolute Gods, the Battle God, was furious with him. This man once followed and served him. That was why he was furious.

‘How dare he serve another and block the other gods from getting to that person?!’

So, the Battle God sent his troops over and over again.

The man continued to fight even amidst the bone-chilling cold.

“Haa... Haa...” His breath had turned ragged. He could not even remember how many enemies he had cut down since he started this. In fact, he did not even remember how many of them he chased after when they escaped from his grasp and crossed through the warp gate.

Exhausted beyond belief, he lost his grip on his sword. However, behind him was a mountain of corpses, the corpses of the soldiers of the Divine Troops that he had killed. However, there were still plenty of soldiers from the Divine Troops standing in front of him.

“Step aside!”

“You, who once was the Absolute God’s Sword, swear your allegiance to the Battle God once again!”

The soldiers of the Divine Troops could not understand why the Battle God wanted this person by his side so much. Perhaps he just wanted this man, who had a different power than Nerva, to come back to his arms?

“The Battle God has declared that he will forgive you as long as you stand down!”

“...”

But Brod did not say anything. He just picked up the cold and hard sword that fell on the ground while thinking, *‘Did His Majesty have his meal yet?’*

My King, who loves to eat.

‘Does his head hurt?’

My master, who lives through several hardships and adversities.

‘This subordinate of yours is doing well.’

Brod smiled faintly.

‘Your Majesty, perhaps this subordinate of yours will not be able to see you anymore.’

Brod grabbed his sword tightly. There was a pang on his chest at the thought of the sad look on his king’s face if he truly died here. More than being sad, perhaps he would even hate himself for not being by Brod’s side.

Grab—

Brod held onto his sword as tightly as he could as he looked at his enemies.

“I...”

Brod, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s commander-in-chief, ran toward the hundreds of thousands of Divine Troops with his sword in his hands and said, “...only serve one man!”

Chapter 723: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

Special Players Management Team.

In this quiet space, Employee Lee Minhwa could be seen waving urgently at Team Leader Park Minggyu. “Team, Team Leader!”

“What’s the matter?” Park Minggyu approached Lee Minhwa with a strange look on his face and stared at her monitor. There, on the monitor, was a very familiar player.

“The Food God?”

“Yes.”

“What’s wrong with him?”

“Right now, the Food God is headed to the Sage’s Tower of Magic.”

“...What?” Team Leader Park’s face turned ugly.

There were numerous towers in the Athenae worldview. It could even be said that they were overflowing. There were even several of them that were of the same name in every empire or kingdom. Some of the empires had grown famous because of their own towers, such as the ‘Tower of Swordsmanship’ or the ‘Tower of Axemanship.’

The Sage’s Tower of Magic was different. It was an absolute existence that even the Great Luvien Empire did not dare to touch. It also did not belong to any kingdom or empire.

.

This tower, had once been on the verge of collapse after it seemed to have been abandoned, and then, it was rebuilt by a man named Andeiro, most renowned in Athenae as the strongest Great Mage. Since he possessed all of the knowledge in the world, the tower that he resided in was called the Sage's Tower of Magic.

The question was why in the world would the Food God head to that place?

"Food God Allen's friends are all slumbering in that tower, right...?"

That was right. The original owner of that abandoned tower was Allen, the previous Food God. In Minhyuk's case, a class quest regarding this tower would only be triggered when he reaches Level 650.

There was also an explanation for why the expression on the two's faces turned serious.

"The previous Food God was someone that had connections with more absolute existences than the current Player Minhyuk."

Of course, they were already in their soul forms and they did not actually live in this place. However, their souls might be able to manifest in response to Food God Minhyuk's will.

Park Minggyu shook his head not long after.

"Tower Master Andeiro will not allow Player Minhyuk, who has not reached Level 650 yet, to climb the tower. He is still unqualified to do so. After all, he would immediately trigger the tower's trials the moment he entered. It is a fact that even the people of the Great Luvien Empire could not even break through one of the tower's trials."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. But why is the Food God heading there?"

Lee Minhwa turned to look at her monitor once again as she explained the situation to Minggyu. After learning that this was for Brod, all Team Leader Park could do was rest his forehead in his palm.

Unfortunately, Supercomputer Athenae had determined that Brod would die within two weeks. Even the executives of Joy Co. Ltd. were of the same mind. It was nigh impossible for a man to live and survive in the Land of the Gods while facing the wrath of the gods.

But then, Lee Minhwa felt restless. *'This feeling... I have felt this way so many times now.'*

Indeed, Lee Minhwa felt something very similar whenever the Food God was trying to do something. The feeling that he would be able to overcome the situation that they deemed that he would not be able to break through.

"What if he successfully enters the tower?"

"..." Team Leader Park pondered for a long time. He looked at the monitor and said, "Then, we might be able to witness the rise of another sun in that world."

The Sage's Tower of Magic was surrounded by rough and difficult terrain. The only way to reach it was to pass through a very long canyon. The problem was it was almost impossible to do so.

'The unchosen ones will not be able to pass through this canyon.'

From what Minhyuk had heard, Alex, the American mage, was one of the chosen ones. It was said that he was only presented with a very short and easy trial before entering the tower. This only happened because he was chosen.

'Ali tried to force his way through but he eventually failed.'

Yes, that was right. Even Golden Mage Ali had failed to set foot in the Sage's Tower of Magic because he was not recognized as one of the chosen ones.

At the entrance to the canyon, there was a sign with the symbol of a skull painted on it. These notifications would ring in the challengers' ears the moment they looked at the sign:

[Andeiro's Valley of Death.]

[Only the 'Chosen Ones' can enter through Andeiro's Valley of Death.]

[Warning! If you ignore this sign, you will receive a penalty that is five times higher than normal upon your death.]

[You might receive Andeiro's recognition in the middle of the trial. If you receive his recognition, you will be given one chance to go outside.]

[Warning!]

[It is recommended that you turn around and go back to where you came from.]

Andeiro was someone that knew everything, whether it was about ancient weapons, methods of combining and assembling weapons, and even the locations of cooking ingredients. Many people had tried to visit him here to consult him. However, all of them died, suffering a 5x penalty.

However, even after looking at the sign, Minhyuk still did not stop.

Thud, thud, thud—

'I haven't done anything for Brod yet.'

After looking back on everything, Minhyuk realized that he had only been on the receiving end of Brod's kindness, even if he did not give anything in return. He also realized that he had never cooked anything for Brod alone.

Although Brod was much more reserved compared to the others, he had always stood by Minhyuk's side. So, even if he was at risk of receiving a huge penalty, he still wanted to challenge this for him.

[You have entered Andeiro's Valley of Death.]

[Upon death, you will receive a 5x penalty.]

[The only way to get past Andeiro's Valley of Death is to kill all the monsters that will appear in around ten minutes.]

Slash, slash, slash, slash—

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

Every time Minhyuk swung his sword, an explosion would engulf the monsters and blood beads would rise from their dead bodies.

Fortunately, Minhyuk had a variety of skills that could allow him to survive a long and drawn out battle. A prime example of that was the Slaughterer's Absorption. With the Slaughterer's Absorption in his arsenal, his HP would not be depleted so easily.

Fighting here in Andeiro's Valley of Death had another advantage.

[You have gained 431,111 EXP.]

[You have gained 1,031,000 EXP.]

Hunting monsters in this canyon would allow him to increase his EXP. Hunting such a large number of monsters was a very rare opportunity for any player. They would be able to bomb their levels up if they used this opportunity well, on the assumption that they did not die. After all, a 5x penalty would be waiting for them if they died.

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

Minhyuk, who was only using his basic attacks and passive skills to deal with the monsters, soon heard a series of notifications in his ears.

[Fifteen minutes have passed.]

[All monsters will regenerate!]

[You have hunted 2,439 monsters.]

Minhyuk nodded when he heard the notifications.

'The EXP I get is not that bad.'

Minhyuk's goal right now was to reach Level 600 and he still needed another 24 more levels to reach that. However, it was quite hard to level up now. He was not even able to increase his level by one even after two weeks of grinding elsewhere.

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

Minhyuk once again started attacking the monsters with just his basic attacks. Just like this, he continued farming even after forty minutes had passed by.

Andeiro was the master of the Sage's Tower of Magic. He was also known as the strongest Great Mage in existence. Right now, Andeiro was watching Minhyuk fight the monsters through a crystal ball.

"A foolish king." Andeiro, a sage that knew a lot and whose face had turned ugly, shook his head. "You must not help Brod."

The fire on the candle that he created shook fiercely as if it was about to die out from the wind.

"...He will die soon," Andeiro muttered. There was a clear bitterness to his words.

Minhyuk should not meet with him nor try to help Brod. Because Brod already knew that Minhyuk, who he was trying to protect with all his might, would be hurt by the truth or attempt to aid him.

“It’s impossible.”

Andeiro shook his head as he watched Minhyuk fight the monsters. He was not one of the Chosen Ones and none of those that he did not choose had ever crossed that canyon. Not even the Swords of the Gods or the soldiers of the Great Luvien Empire could pass through it. Besides, Food God Minhyuk was far too weak to meet with him right now.

An hour had passed since Andeiro started watching Minhyuk.

“...Why isn’t he using his powers?” Andeiro asked aloud.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

“...?!”

Andeiro’s eyes grew wide. He was sure that the man was only using his basic attacks.

‘Did he get stronger?!’

That was right. Minhyuk was growing stronger. After around twenty five minutes, Andeiro received another shock.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

‘He, he grew stronger again?!!!!!!!’

Then, another thirty minutes passed.

‘Agaaaaaaaain?!!!!!’

Indeed. Minhyuk was growing stronger and stronger as time went by. It was something that was beyond Andeiro’s comprehension. The notification that rang ten minutes later almost caused him to question his rationality.

[The challenger hunted 4,578 monsters in fifteen minutes.]

“...?!”

At first, the man only hunted around 2,800 monsters. But in just three hours, that number skyrocketed.

“He was able to hunt 1,700 more in just that short amount of time?”

It was completely unbelievable. Usually, the number of monsters that the challenger could hunt would significantly decrease as time went by. This was because the monsters would continue to regenerate, while the challengers would have already used up all of their powers and get exhausted. In other words, they would have reached their bottom line. However, Minhyuk was able to kill 4,500 monsters without using any kind of power.

Two hours passed.

“...Why doesn’t he look tired?!?”

And another two hours...

“Why isn’t he getting tired?!”

And another hour...

“Why?!!!!”

[The challenger has hunted a total of 30,000 monsters.]

[The challenger has bought the legendary-grade ingredient ‘Revia’s Pork’ from the Magic Shop.]

“...?”

Andeiro continued to watch Minhyuk. Just like that, another three hours passed by.

[The challenger...a total of 30,000 monsters.]

[The challenger has bought the legendary-grade ingredient ‘Katarina’s Sesame Leaf’ from the Magic Shop.]

Andeiro’s Magic Shop was filled with many rare and precious items. There were actually many legendary-grade items in there. However, people had always said that the rewards that they could get from there were quite stingy and not generous at all. Challengers that could kill a total of 30,000 monsters were usually among the top ten in the world. That was why they found the rewards to be lacking.

Just like that, two days had passed.

[...a total of 30,000 monsters.]

[...challenger... bought... ‘Corde’s Honey’...]

[...challenger... bought... ‘Kevin’s Caviar’...]

[...challenger...bought... ‘Shining Wheat’...]

[...challenger...bought... ‘Flying Chicken’s Egg’...]

It had to be known that all of the items inside Andeiro’s Magic Shop were items that Andeiro had obtained through great hardships.

Flash—

Then, Minhyuk was enveloped in a bright light. In the NPCs’ perspective, that light was the ‘light of growth’. As for the players, it was a sign of leveling up. This was Minhyuk gaining a level.

[This~ is a jackpot! A jackpot!]

“...?”

At this moment, Andeiro realized that the trial of the Valley of Death was being used against him. That man was basically robbing him of plenty of the things that he had collected in his life!

Chapter 724: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

Was the level of the player proportional to the strength that they wielded? Well, it was only half correct. When one's level increases, they would be able to get bonus stats, as well as class quests and skill quests that were available to that level.

However, ironic as it was, the highest-leveled player Fabian was not the most influential player in the game. Fabian was at Level 592, the officially recognized highest level in the game. Rumor had it that this was because he was the 'God of Growth' and he could gain 2.5x more EXP than others.

There were not that many high rankers in the global top ten rankings. As for Food God Minhyuk? His level was around the top 500. But in just two days, he jumped to the top 450.

[The Food God leveled up.]

[He's probably grinding levels? Well, he must have done it because it's worth leveling up.]

[He deserves it, he's been busy running his kingdom after all.]

Of course, everyone did not think too much about it at first. However, there were changes again just a day after he leveled up.

[...The Food God leveled up again?]

[OMG... He's already at the bottom half of those at the top 300s.]

[What did he do to level up that much in a day? Is it a bug?]

The speed at which players at Level 550 or above leveled up was known to be extremely slow. In fact, there were many players that could not level up even once in a span of a month. And yet, Minhyuk was able to do so in just a day. On that day, just ten hours after he leveled up, the rankings changed once more.

[...The, the Food God leveled up again.]

[What?! Isn't this a bug?!]

[This is obviously a bug! There's an error in the official homepage!]

Everyone believed that there was a system error in the official homepage. So, they reported it to Joy Co. Ltd.

[We have checked Player Minhyuk according to the reports of some players and have found that there is no 'bug'.]

Just like that, Minhyuk entered the top 200. For the actual high-leveled rankers, a small difference in level could bring about huge changes. Minhyuk was now only nineteen levels behind Fabian.

The rankings finally started to fluctuate.

[You have acquired the 'Elixir of the Fast Growing One' from Andeiro's Magic Shop.]

[You have consumed the Elixir of the Fast Growing One.]

[Your EXP Acquisition Rate will increase to x3 for one week.]

Three days had already passed by but Minhyuk still continued to fight the monsters without taking a rest. The average number of monsters that Minhyuk had killed in a day during his non-stop hunt was around 50,000.

In fact, this opportunity to bomb his level up was very hard to come by. It was common for players to only hunt around twenty to fifty monsters that fit their level. They usually did not go past that number. After all, they had to take into account the monsters' regeneration speed and the number of players that were with them on the field.

However, right now, monsters keep on regenerating for Minhyuk. Furthermore...

[You have hunted a Sheet Metal Owl Bear.]

[You have gained 1,316,000 EXP.]

[You have gained 43,038 platinum.]

[You have acquired the Sheet Metal Owl Bear's Sturdy Sheet Metal (2kg).]

[You have acquired the Sheet Metal Owl Bear's Skin.]

The monsters not only gave him EXP but also dropped artifacts. The concept of drops here was not the kind of drop where one had to pick them up manually. The drops in this place would automatically get absorbed in his inventory.

'I have already gained around 15,000 platinum. If I count the miscellaneous items that I got, then I already have around 40,000 platinum on hand.'

That was not all. Since he took the Elixir of the Fast Growing One the EXP that he acquired was tripled. It was said that something special would happen once a player reached Level 600. This was a fact that even a Level 10 player would know. So, Minhyuk did not want to let go of this opportunity. Of course, three days of non-stop hunting was exhausting. But that did not matter.

More importantly, Minhyuk was still hunting the monsters with his basic attacks alone. What was his reason?

'Andeiro's Magic Shop. This shop is my only ticket out of the Valley of Death.'

Before doing something, Minhyuk would always draw a virtual simulation in his head. Seeing the spread of items from Andeiro's Magic Shop, he instinctively knew, *'I need to do hard and repetitive labor.'*

What if he combined the items, especially the ingredients, with his own power?

'I can break through this place.'

Was this a plan that anyone could execute? Not at all. This plan was something that only he could carry out because he had the Slaughterer's Absorption, along with the cauldron lid's special skill that allowed him to withstand and endure the named monsters' inherent skills. As for how he could continue to stand tall and not falter? It was all thanks to the synergistic effect created by the combination of the Slaughterer's Armor, Absorption Conversion, Lightning, and Minhyuk's own mental strength.

[The Divine Will has been triggered.]

There was also the Divine Will, which would get triggered every once in a while and kept him from collapsing. Then, he bought another item.

[You have acquired Andeiro's +1 Skill Enhancement from Andeiro's Magic Shop.]

Minhyuk had only purchased cooking ingredients so far. At this point, he had already swept up all of the ingredients in the Magic Shop. So, he turned to other things and had now purchased quite a lot of them.

In addition to Andeiro's +1 Skill Enhancement, he also purchased Andeiro's 140% Skill Attack Power Enhancement Parchment and the 100% Probability Passive Skill Activation Parchment.

'Andeiro is truly an outstanding mage.'

Mages could also create parchments and elixirs, albeit not all of the time. The items that Andeiro created could surpass any decent alchemist by a huge margin. The main reason was because there was an overlapping effect attached to all of the items that he created. However, in exchange, it had the disadvantage of being Andeiro's item.

Piiiiiiiiing—!

A Colossal-winged Gryphon opened its mouth and fired a ray of light at Minhyuk. Although the attack could easily melt away most rankers if they were in his position, he was able to block it with the cauldron lid.

Baaaaaaaang—

However, Minhyuk could not balance out the power of the attack so he was sent flying back.

"Ugh..."

Minhyuk hurriedly stood up and threw the cauldron lid to deal with the crowd of monsters that gathered around him, which also created some space for him to fight back. Then, he pulled out his Continent Destroyer Sword and started another round of hunting.

However, he could not deny that he was getting exhausted. He did not expect that continuously hunting monsters like this would take a larger toll on his mental strength than his other quests before. He wanted to quit. However, he remembered how Brod fought all by himself without telling him at all.

'This is all I can do for you, so I will not stop.'

Ping—

Minhyuk leapt to the skies and cut down the Colossal-winged Gryphon.

'Is there a way for me to not get tired?'

He could not fall down until he collected everything that he needed. At that moment, he received a terrible notification.

[Your Vassal Brod's HP has fallen below 10%.]

[Vassal Brod is on the brink of death.]

These notifications would ring if the NPCs that were registered as a player's vassal were in any danger.

"...!"

Minhyuk's face turned ugly upon hearing the notifications.

God of Conflicts Belovan was among the highest-ranking gods and was considered to be the one closest to an Absolute God. He looked at the warp gate that connected to the human realm that was blocked with some sort of red energy.

"I never expected that you would use such petty tricks." Belovan was solemn, having watched the man endure and fight fiercely for days on end, while still standing until this moment. Then, he looked at the mountains of corpses formed by the bodies of hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the Divine Army.

The reason why God of Conflicts Belovan was considered as the being closest to an Absolute God was because he possessed power that not even the other gods could afford to take lightly. But this very same god was both shocked and terrified by the power that Brod displayed.

"I can't understand."

Just when Belovan thought that he already had Brod in the palm of his hands, the man sealed the warp gate and pulled away from them. It was likely so he could prevent them from descending on earth and attacking the Food God, the king that he served. However, this could only delay them for ten days. And even though he escaped, he was gravely injured.

'How... You are already in that state, so how...'

Brod had received several injuries, with several weapons sticking out of his body. And that was not all, he had also received an attack from Belovan himself. But even if his situation was dire, he was still able to deal a huge blow to Belovan and the Divine Army and escape from their grasp.

"There's no way that he could go far. The Battle God has ordered to capture him alive!"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

Not only the soldiers of the Divine Army but even some of the gods that served the Battle God had joined in. Sooner or later, they would be able to find Brod.

'Why does our Lord want to take him back so badly?'

Why did the Battle God let the man go despite him going against his own will? But as he looked at the blood-stained spot where the man stood, Belovan felt like he understood himself a bit.

At the same time, at another location.

Brod, who was gasping for breath, laid down on the ground behind a huge rock. The ground beside him was filled with blood-stained weapons that he pulled out from his own body.

“Haa... haa...”

A blizzard raged in the Land of the Gods, blanketing the area with a thick pile of snow. Every ragged breath that escaped his mouth would turn white from the cold.

“I can’t die yet,” Brod muttered as he applied the herbs that he had gathered here in the Land of the Gods to heal his wounds.

I can’t die yet. I need to protect His Majesty longer.

Flutter—

Brod’s eyes slowly fluttered to a close. All he wanted was to get one look.

“Your Majesty...”

Even if he died here and fell into eternal rest at the very least let him see the face of his beloved king one last time.

Grip—

“Brod.”

Minhyuk gritted his teeth as his hold on his sword tightened. He had not done anything for Brod yet but Brod was going to leave him

‘This is an order, Brod. Don’t die.’

He had to be there. So, Minhyuk began to move faster.

At the same time, Andeiro, who was watching him, was shocked. *‘...He’s gotten a lot faster?’*

Only then did Andeiro realize that Minhyuk had been maintaining his pace to preserve his strength. But now, he was speeding up.

“Brod. Just wait a bit more. I’m coming. So, hang in there just a bit longer.”

Andeiro, who was watching this through his crystal ball, felt a throb in his chest. Then, he quickly used his crystal ball to check on another scene. He looked at none other than Brod, who was in the Land of the Gods. Andeiro could not take his eyes off of this man’s appearance, an appearance that looked like he was going to die for the man that he served.

Just like that, a day, then three days passed by. During that time, Brod desperately ran away to survive longer. He was doing his best and struggling to live to the point that he looked so shabby and unkempt that one would not recognize him as the Absolute God’s Sword.

Two days passed like that once again. However, the king that he served could not cross the threshold. It was impossible. That was just how it is.

However, Andeiro saw the man cook inside a transparent barrier. All of the ingredients that he was using were those that he purchased from Andeiro's Magic Shop.

Andeiro looked away and turned his attention to Brod once again. Brod had allowed another attack to graze his body as he struggled to cut his enemies down and escape.

Clench—

Andeiro's palms clenched into fists. He could not bear to see the state that Brod was in. A drop of tear unknowingly dripped down his cheek.

"Someone..."

The feeling that he had buried deep inside his heart, a feeling that he believed to have disappeared, once again resurfaced.

"Anyone, please save Brod."

Then, something extraordinary happened.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

A pillar of light shot down from the sky. As for the place that it landed? It was none other than the place where the king that Brod saved was in.

Andeiro hurriedly turned to look at the crystal ball. There, he saw the man with his black hair fluttering with the wind, his white cape that carried the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together, facing against 20,000 monsters.

Andeiro wore his own artifact, the 'Eye of All Creation' which was in the form of glasses, and looked at the man. The Eye of All Creation was an artifact that could see through the power that the opponent possessed.

He watched through the crystal ball as the man looked at the monsters and said, "Double Food."

[The Eye of All Creation is scrutinizing the opponent.]

[Double Food can create a copy of a dish!]

"Overlapping Delight."

[Overlapping Delight can allow buff effects of two dishes to take effect at the same time.]

[He received two buff effects at the same time using a God-grade dish!]

[He has received the Max Skill Enhancement effect from the Seafood Kal-Guksu!]

[Overlapping Delight has increased his Sword of Absolute Death from Level 9 to Level 13!]

"Use Andeiro's Skill Enhancement."

[Sword of Absolute Death's level has increased to Level 14!]

"Use Andeiro's 140% Skill Attack Power Enhancement Parchment."

[Sword of Absolute Death's damage has increased by 140%!]

"Use Andeiro's 100% Probability Passive Skill Activation Parchment."

[He has applied the parchment effects to Passive Skill: Double Skill.]

[Sword of Absolute Death's force has doubled!]

At that moment, cracks appeared on the lenses of the Eye of All Creation.

[Warning! Immeasurable.]

[Warning! Immeasurable.]

[Warning! Immeasurable.]

Andeiro stared at Minhyuk in disbelief. At that moment, another notification rang. It was the voice of an unidentified Absolute God.

[The lowest God...]

Minhyuk glared sharply at the 20,000 monsters in front of him through his fluttering black hair. Then, he swung his sword and said, "Sword of Absolute Death."

The moment his sword came down, tens of thousands of red sword lights appeared in the sky.

Clatter—

In the end, Andeiro's Eye of All Creation broke apart as the unknown voice finished the words that they started.

[...wields the greatest sword.]

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

Chapter 725: The Sage's Tower of Magic

[You have completed a Spicy Stir-fried Pork.]

[Trance. It is a dish that has your heart, effort, a king's heart to give his all for his vassal, and a master's soul poured into it.]

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect has become better and the dish grade has increased.]

[You have fallen into a surprising state of Trance.]

[The buff effects and dish grade will become slightly better.]

[Something special might happen due to the effects of Trance.]

[God Grade.]

[All of your stats have increased by 27%.]

[All of your skills' levels have increased by +2.]

[Your physical and magical attack have increased by 30%.]

[Your HP and MP has been restored to 100%.]

Minhyuk stared at the spicy stir-fried pork in front of him that was struck by a pillar of light as soon as the notifications rang in his ears.

"Fwaaaaa..."

He had been so deep in his trance that it was only now that the things around him had started to come into focus. That was when he caught sight of one of the notifications.

‘Something special might happen because of Trance?’ Minhyuk thought, guessing that perhaps the skill Trance had undergone some changes.

He once again inspected the spicy stir-fried pork in front of him. It seemed like while he was in a trance, he had also made some soft steamed eggs that would go together with the dish. There was also some lettuce to make some wraps with, lying next to a bowl of rice, as well as a bowl of siraegi[1] soybean paste soup.

‘I have been working hard for a few days, no?’

Since he had been hunting monsters non-stop, it was only natural that he forgot about his hunger.

The first thing that Minhyuk did was to taste a spoonful of the steaming siraegi soybean paste soup. The deep and savory flavor of the soup spread in his mouth the moment he took that first sip.

Then, he scooped another spoonful, this time with a mouthful of dried radish leaves. He chewed the sprouts that had been gently covered with the warmth of the soup, before scooping a mouthful of the still-steaming rice and putting it in his mouth.

“Kghhkhk...”

The rice was good and well-cooked! Every bite was sweet, soft, and chewy. Just like that, he scooped a huge mouthful of spicy stir-fried pork and pushed it in his mouth.

Munch, munch—

The spicy and sweet stir-fried pork created a fantastic harmony of flavors in his mouth.

This time, Minhyuk spread a leaf of lettuce on his palm. Then, he scooped half a spoonful of rice, a huge heaping of spicy stir-fried pork, some garlic dipped in ssamjang, and some kimchi. Then, he closed the lettuce into a wrap that he crammed in his mouth. The various ingredients inside the wrap unleashed a cacophony of flavors that danced in his mouth.

Gulp—

Minhyuk’s throat bobbed as he scooped a spoonful of the soft-looking steamed egg. He then proceeded to dump it in his bowl of rice, mixing it together before putting it in his mouth.

“Kghhk...” Minhyuk burst out in admiration as he took another scoop of the siraegi soybean paste soup.

After eating for some time, he took out another bowl of rice. He dumped the bowl of rice on the bowl of spicy stir-fried pork, sprinkled some seaweed powder on it and mixed everything thoroughly. After mixing everything, he placed two perfectly fried eggs on top of it.

Drip—

One of the fried egg’s yolk dripped down the mixed rice with a slight press of the spoon. Minhyuk quickly mixed everything and scooped a mouthful that he chomped down on.

“Kghhhhk!”

Minhyuk could not help but admire the flavor that spread in his mouth. This time, he cut the remaining egg in larger pieces before eating everything in large bites.

After he finished eating, the barrier slowly disappeared. Minhyuk walked out and faced the 20,000 monsters with a fierce glare as the notifications for the various buff effects that overlapped in his body rang in his ears.

Minhyuk had been working hard in the Valley of Death for this day and the time had finally come.

[Overlapping Delight has increased Sword of Absolute Death from Level 9 to Level 13!]

[The skill: Sword of Absolute Death's power has reached the level of an Absolute God's Secret!]

[You have used Andeiro's Skill Enhancement. Sword of Absolute Death's Level has increased to Level 14!]

[The power of the Sword of Absolute Death can no longer be measured!]

[You have used Andeiro's 140% Skill Attack Power Enhancement Parchment!]

[Various Gods are watching with bated breath as you wield the sword with the skill that you created!]

[You have used Andeiro's 100% Probability Passive Skill Activation Parchment!]

[The Sword of Absolute Death's effects are doubled.]

[The power of the Sword of Absolute Death can no longer be measured!]

[Incredible! You have created a powerful force that no other gods have ever created!]

[The Greatest God, who has been watching you challenge the impossible, has responded to you!]

[The Eight Pillars from all over the world are responding to your power!]

[You have created a power that is on par with the power of the Eight Pillars!]

[You have taken a step closer to becoming one of the Eight Pillars.]

A shocking series of notifications rang non-stop in Minhyuk's ears. But it did not end there. As the only knight that the Greatest God had ever acknowledged, the Greatest God praised Minhyuk for his new achievement.

[The lowest God...]

Without any further hesitation, Minhyuk swung his sword toward the 20,000 monsters that stood in front of him.

“Sword of Absolute Death.”

[...wields the greatest sword.]

The message, a world message, resounded all over the world as tens of thousands of red sword lights appeared in the sky and shot toward the monsters, sweeping them away without mercy.

[Damage cannot be measured!]

Even Minhyuk, the one that used the skill, could not determine the extent of damage that he dealt to his opponents. What was more surprising was the fact that the attack did not dissipate even after it

slammed into the walls of the canyon. It just continued to cut through the walls of the cliffs as it was.

Rumbleeeeeeeeeee—

Even the named monsters that were known for their hard and tough skins split in half at the slightest touch of the blood-red sword lights.

Rumbleeeeeeeeeee—

The canyon walls, which had been carved out after thousands of years, collapsed and crushed the monsters that fled from Minhyuk's devastating attack.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A thick cloud of dust shot up to the sky as Minhyuk, the only one left in the place, walked forward silently.

[You have broken through Andeiro's Valley of Death with amazing records!]

[You have gained 50,000,000,000 EXP.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have gained a +1% increase in all of your stats.]

[You can ask Andeiro one question that you are most curious about.]

[You can ask Andeiro one thing that you want the most.]

[The level of the Sword of Absolute Death has increased by +2.]

Just when those notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears, goosebumps suddenly bloomed all over his body while his legs buckled and his vision went dark. A pitch-black darkness engulfed Minhyuk completely. In this darkness, several eyes—some were yellow, some were off-white, some were clean and pure, and some were blood-shot—stared at Minhyuk.

[Some of the Eight Pillars are looking for the one that created a power that transcended their own!]

[Their eyes are staring at you.]

[Their eyes are about to see your face.]

“Keheooooook!” A loud groan escaped Minhyuk's mouth. This mysterious and unknown phenomenon felt so stifling to the point that he felt like he was going to die.

[Obren, who is slumbering inside the Puzzling Seasoning Jar, has awakened!]

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

At that moment, a bright light burst out in the darkness as Obren appeared and hugged Minhyuk tightly, hiding his face from the eyes that were staring at him in this endless void.

Obren glared sharply and coldly at the entities pressuring Minhyuk and spat, “Get lost!”

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The scene changed in an instant.

[Some of the Eight Pillars failed to find out your identity!]

[The power of Obren, one of the Eight Pillars, is protecting you!]

“I did not expect that you would be able to create a force that could be on par with the powers of the Eight Pillars...” Obren mumbled in shock as he slowly let go of his hold on Minhyuk.

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Minhyuk, the lowest-ranking god, had created a power that is close or perhaps even surpassed the power of the Eight Pillars. It was shocking as even the Absolute Gods could not create something like that as they wanted. Of course, it was only a one-time thing.

“Are you telling me that you’re really one of the candidates of the Eight Pillars of this era?” Obren asked Minhyuk. However, he quickly said, “You’re acting way too unruly. You can’t be like this. Try to think about your body next time.”

“Why are the Eight Pillars...”

“There is no one in the world that likes the emergence of a new powerhouse.”

“...”

Minhyuk could not answer back. It was just like what Obren said. There might be some from the Eight Pillars that did not pay any heed to Minhyuk. However, each person and being had a different personality. There would probably be some that were wary of his existence and wanted to nip him in the bud before he grew any further.

Shiver—

Goosebumps once again appeared on Minhyuk’s back. What would have happened if Obren did not appear and protect him?

‘I would probably be forced to give up on Athenae...?’

Perhaps that would happen. After all, the power of the Eight Pillars that Minhyuk knew of was absolute.

“It would be impossible to hide from their eyes for a long time. My power to protect you is also limited.”

Obren was in a weakened state. There was no way that he could protect Minhyuk forever. In other words, Minhyuk had to grow stronger, strong enough to protect himself from *them*.

“I’m going back to sleep.”

Obren might not have manifested a body but he had spent plenty of energy when he protected Minhyuk from *them*. Obren left Minhyuk behind, whose back was still dripping with cold sweat, and returned to the Puzzling Seasoning Jar.

After that, Minhyuk walked toward the Sage's Tower of Magic. The moment he went inside, he received a couple of notifications.

[You have entered the Sage's Tower of Magic.]

[You have gained 500 REP.]

A man, who looked very reliable despite his age with his tall and sturdy build, holding a staff in his hands appeared in front of Minhyuk. This man was none other than Andeiro, the master and owner of this tower.

Andeiro could not help but gulp dryly. *'I didn't expect the Eight Pillars to show their interest in this man.'*

Andeiro had witnessed everything that happened with his own eyes. He thought that Minhyuk should never enter his tower. Minhyuk wanted to save Brod, who was sacrificing himself for Minhyuk. However, he thought that Brod's sacrifice would all be in vain if this man fought recklessly with the Gods.

But at one point, Andeiro changed his mind. Besides, he also had an obligation to fulfill. He had to answer one question and grant one wish for the one that would be able to pass through the Valley of Death without his recognition.

Minhyuk also knew about this fact. So, he went straight to the point. "Sir Andeiro, I heard from Luo that you have served Brod in the past. I believe you already know what's going on right now."

Of course, Andeiro was aware of the entire story.

"Please let me know of a way to save Brod," Minhyuk asked politely.

Andeiro, the greatest mage in the world that even the Great Luvien Empire could not touch, slowly opened his mouth and said, "There is only one way to save Lord Brod."

"..."

"And that is through the power of the Food God."

"...?"

Andeiro's words were confusing. True, Minhyuk had considered the Food God as an extremely amazing god. However, as time passed by and he started interacting and learning about beings like the Absolute Gods, the Six Monster Gods, and the Eight Pillars, he had slowly begun to change his mind.

'I am but one small and trivial god in this vast world.'

However, Andeiro told him that only the power of the Food God could save Brod.

"What are you saying? I don't understand. Brod is in the Land of the Gods right now..."

"That's right. He's being chased by the Battle God's Divine Army in the Land of the Gods. The Battle God is the highest ranking god among the Absolute Gods. In that place, he is an absolute existence."

Could such an absolute being be overpowered by a mere god, someone that was not even an Absolute God, and save Brod?

Thud, thud, thud—

Andeiro turned around and walked away with Minhyuk following right behind his heels. Then, he watched as Andeiro grabbed the knob on a door. The door had the pattern of a fork and a plate engraved on it.

‘Why is that symbol here?’

That symbol was the symbol of none other than the former Food God, Allen.

The moment the door opened, a vast land greeted the two of them.

[The Food God’s slumbering friends and comrades have awakened at the appearance of the Food God!]

Minhyuk just closed his eyes very briefly. But when he opened them, hundreds of people had appeared throughout the vast land and were looking at him. There was even a man sitting on a throne with his legs crossed and looking at him.

[The Food God’s friend, the Continental Emperor, wants to test you!]

[He is a legend of the continent!]

There was also a man sitting on top of a dragon’s head. The man looked at Minhyuk and smiled.

[The Food God’s friend, the Monster Lord, wants to test you!]

[He is...the continent!]

There was a handsome man with his sword resting on his shoulder.

[The Food God’s friend, the Legendary Swordsman, wants...]

[The Food God’s friend...]

[The Food God’s friend...]

[The Food God’s friend...!]

Bright light flashed all over the place with another blink of Minhyuk’s eyes.

[The Food God’s friend, Mage Efren, wants to test you!]

[He is a god!]

[The Food God’s friend, Archer Kallaman, wants to test you!]

[He...a god!]

[The Food God’s friend...]

[The Food God’s friend...]

[The Food God’s friend...!]

Countless notifications rang in Minhyuk’s ears. All of the people that appeared looked at Minhyuk with either a look of interest, or a look filled with arrogance.

“Graaaaaaaaaa!”

“Keuhaaaaaaaaack!”

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

Thump—! Thump—! Thump—! Thump—!

And what appeared behind them were monsters, soldiers, knights and even divine armies, the troops that they were leading.

Then, another set of notifications rang in Minhyuk’s ears.

[Before this place was abandoned and neglected, this was the Food God’s Tower!]

[The souls of the Food God’s friends want to test you, who have inherited his power!]

[The Food God has befriended 643 legends and 3 gods!]

Andeiro looked back at Minhyuk and said, “They’re the only way for you to save Lord Brod.”

Chapter 726: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

The former Food God, Allen, was the one that was most similar to Minhyuk in terms of personality. Just like Minhyuk, he had hoped that there would be no hungry people in this world. He also had a very cheerful and friendly personality, and had an abundance of people by his side.

The original owner of the Sage’s Tower of Magic had been Food God Allen. But before he headed for the Abyss, he had gathered all of his friends here and had a meal with them. Then, he left these words to them.

—Even if I die, a banquet will be held for you here once every year.

Not long after, Allen fell into slumber in the Abyss. Since then, every year, his friends would visit the Food God’s Tower. Former Food God Allen had used his special power to allow his friends to eat delicious dishes whenever they came here. This setting continued even after his death.

All of Allen’s friends loved and cherished him deeply. That was why they wanted to find his grave. However, that was impossible. Their souls continued to come to this abandoned tower year after year in hopes that they would see him again, or eat the dishes that he cooked for them again one day.

Now, Minhyuk, Allen’s successor, appeared in front of them. The moment he entered the tower, all of the souls that longed to see Allen gathered together.

“...”

Minhyuk felt a huge pressure on his shoulders at the sight of them. There was a Continental Emperor sitting on his throne, a Monster Lord sitting cross-legged atop a dragon’s head, and even three gods looking at him with interest.

‘The lowest, yet the greatest god. This name suits Allen the most, no?’

He never became an Absolute God but there were so many people waiting for him to return. It just showed how much they treasured Allen during their lifetime.

It was also at that moment that Minhyuk realized the method that Andeiro told him to save Brod. *‘Together with them...?’*

Then, Andeiro spoke, “Originally, you would have to come to this tower when you’re stronger. But even without my recognition, you were still able to enter this tower. That inevitably changes a few things.”

Minhyuk realized that he would eventually come to this place once he reached a certain level. But based on the notification that he just heard, the contents of the original quest for that specific level could be modified.

“However, it might also remain the same. You might still have to come out of here and return only if you have the power to deal with it.”

The notification had clearly said that the quest ‘Food God’s Friends’ could be changed. In other words, the change might or might not happen, depending on the choice that he made right here and now.

“You have to know that if things change, you will have to take on larger risks.”

[If the Class-Specific Quest is changed, two Food God’s skills will be randomly chosen and deleted upon failure!]

“...!”

Minhyuk’s eyes grew wide at the incredibly harsh penalty for quest failure. Just the thought of skills like ‘Food God’s Cooking Skills’, ‘Create a Recipe’, or ‘Let’s Have a Meal’ getting deleted made him feel terrible. It would truly be a huge loss. Especially ‘Food God’s Cooking Skill’, a skill that had been playing a huge role in Minhyuk’s buffed dishes.

‘Is this the price that I have to pay for testing the system?’

One would think differently and say that this was because the rewards had changed, so they had to take on a bigger risk for trying to gain power beyond their reach.

However, Minhyuk did not take too long to think it over.

“I will do it.”

“...I understand,” Andeiro answered calmly, but deep inside he was quite surprised. In a way, one could describe this situation as the king risking two of his greatest powers just to save his vassal.

The notifications rang at that moment.

Ring!

‘As expected.’

Only after he received all of their recognition would he be able to save Brod. However, how should he go about doing it?

Then, Andeiro snapped his fingers.

“Keuhaaaaaaack!”

An ear-piercing roar rang loudly as an unidentified storage box appeared. The storage box was covered with bright red blood and fastened tightly by dozens of unidentified hands, as if they did not want anyone to open it.

“God’s Cursed Ingredient,” Andeiro said as he handed the box to Minhyuk.

The moment his hands made contact with the box, the hands that fastened it tightly disappeared completely.

“Some call them the ‘Torturous Ingredients’.”

Minhyuk could already guess what he needed to do. “Am I supposed to cook something using this ingredient?”

“That’s right. As you can guess from the moniker that was given, God’s Cursed Ingredients can cause torturous pain to the one cooking them. However, if you successfully cook the dish, you will be able to create God-grade dishes.”

“Is that an unconditional result?”

“Indeed. But the process won’t be easy. Ah. You have to know that the pain that you will feel is only an illusion. However, you won’t be able to distinguish that.”

“...”

Minhyuk looked down at the hideous and terrifying storage box and smiled. Andeiro, who saw this, could not understand. This was the first time that he had seen someone smile when given a cursed ingredient.

“Why are you smiling?”

“The dish created using this ingredient must be delicious, right?”

“...I suppose so. But the process would be very difficult.”

“Then, that means that I can treat Brod to a delicious meal.”

“...”

Andeiro’s heart ached when he heard those words. Rather than thinking of the pain that he would experience, he was thinking about the one that he would be cooking for, smiling at the thought of that person being happy.

‘Or is it just because he’s doing this for Lord Brod?’

Minhyuk stared at the storage box and asked, “What are the ingredients stored inside?”

“You will get whatever ingredient that you want. The moment you take them out, the pain will start to spread through your body.”

Minhyuk closed his eyes for a moment, pondering over what kind of dish Brod would want to eat. Although it might seem uncharacteristic for someone with a build like Brod, he actually liked fried dishes or rice bowl dishes.

After pondering for a moment, Minhyuk finally made a decision. *‘Pork sirloin.’*

Clack—

The surroundings instantly changed the moment Minhyuk opened the storage box.

Crackle—

A river of lava was flowing right in front of Minhyuk, its blazing heat engulfing his entire existence. Just taking a breath could easily heat up his nose and lungs.

[You have acquired God’s Cursed Pork Sirloin.]

Minhyuk began to cook the moment he heard the notifications. The dish that he was trying to cook was curry rice and tonkatsu. One could mix their curry with rice, or dip their tonkatsu in the curry sauce. Both ways of eating were definitely excellent.

[Your STR has quickly depleted.]

[Pain will continuously spread all throughout your body. It will feel like you are suffering from a terrible burn.]

Just when Minhyuk felt like he was getting used to it, a blazing heat spread all over his body. Nevertheless, Minhyuk still started cooking. He did not give up and continued to move his hands.

He first tried to chop and dice the carrots, potatoes, and onions using his ‘Ingredient Acquisition Skill’.

[You cannot use the ‘Ingredient Acquisition Skill’ when cooking the Cursed Pork Sirloin.]

However, a bolt out of the blue rang in his ears. The Ingredient Acquisition Skill was a skill that allowed Minhyuk to slice, dice and chop his ingredients to his desired shape and size all at once.

But, that had become impossible. Minhyuk had no choice but to wash the potatoes and carrots in the water and do it himself.

Just when he was about to wash them in water, his hands were suddenly covered in a chill.

[You have a frostbite.]

[It would be difficult to move your hands.]

“Urk!”

Intense pain struck his hands. It felt like hundreds of sharp fragments of ice were stabbing through his hands. However, he still continued to wash ingredients despite his trembling hands.

Slaaaash—

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

The moment he held the knife to chop and slice the ingredients, Minhyuk felt a bone-deep pain piercing through his left arm. It was as if a knife had stabbed through his flesh and bones. Whenever he sliced or chopped the ingredients, he felt like his entire being was also being slashed and hacked.

“Uwaaaaaack!”

Even if Athenae was a virtual reality game where the sense of pain was reduced, continuous exposure to pain would affect one’s mental state. But, Minhyuk still soldiered on.

After he finished preparing all of the ingredients, he dissolved the curry powder in water and put everything inside the pot and turned the heat on.

Tick, tick, tick, tick—

When the fire started to boil the water, Minhyuk saw something sticky rising swiftly, it was so fast that it had already covered up to his ankles.

[You have fallen into an illusion!]

It felt like he was also boiling just as the ingredients on the pot were boiling. Everything felt so hot, like he was melting all over. Just like Andeiro said, he did not realize that he had already fallen into an illusion.

At that moment, Minhyuk was gripped tightly with fear, and for the first time in a long while, felt like he wanted to give up from the sensation that he was feeling.

“Aaaaaah! Uwaaaaaack!”

The former Food God’s friends were all watching Minhyuk scream as he cooked in the middle of the field. They could not see what he was suffering from, or how much pain he was in.

.

Meanwhile, Andeiro looked at him and thought, *‘I hope you can overcome this.’*

The Continental Emperor, garbed with the mane of a lion, said, “Even Allen failed to cook God’s Cursed Ingredient.”

“Don’t you think that’s too much? It’s too crazy.”

“Hmph. So what if it’s crazy? There is no way that such a person will be able to surpass Allen.”

Their reactions and opinions were varied. Some felt sorry for the Food God’s successor, while some felt that it was a pity that the person that inherited the power of the Food God was nothing but a mere human being.

“What’s the biggest challenge here?”

Andeiro answered the question, “You will see the thing that you fear the most. Even Allen couldn’t overcome that.”

“There’s no way that a mere brat can do something that even Allen can’t do,” one of the gods mocked.

Allen was one of the gods and the only god that approached the realms of the Absolute Gods.

In the end, Minhyuk collapsed.

“...”

“...”

Then, he suddenly grabbed his head and rolled around on the ground.

“It has started. The thing that he feared the most has appeared in front of him and become his current reality.”

Just like mentioned, Minhyuk was currently experiencing the thing that he feared the most.

Minhyuk shouted at the empty space in front of him, “...Uncle Munsoo.”

Everyone held their breath.

“I’m hungry. Please open the door.”

When Minhyuk was at the height of his suffering from his eating addiction and they could not find a cure, he had decided to undergo the worst treatment possible himself. He was locked inside a room where he was forced to fast. Back then, the thing that he feared the most was hunger.

Minhyuk moved as if he was banging on the door. “Uncle, I’m begging you! Please, please open the door. I’m so hungry! I’m hungry!!! Just let me eat something, anything!!!”

There was no hope for him to live after suffering from his eating addiction for a very long time. During that time, Minhyuk was among the only three people that had the disease. Out of the three of them, one had died. Before them, all of the people that had the disease had died before they reached the age of 20 due to the complications brought about by hyper obesity.

“I’m, I’m hungry...!”

When Minhyuk fell down again, he started to swallow something. That something was none other than the tissue that was left inside the room. Everyone watching him frowned when they saw him cram something madly in his mouth.

Then, the sight in front of Minhyuk changed again. This time, it showed Korea's top conglomerate, the Ilhwa Group, Chairman Kang Minhoo and his successor, Kang Minhyuk. Countless people began to point their fingers at Minhyuk, who was suffering from eating addiction. They cursed him and called him a pig and dragged his father down with him.

In Minhyuk's head, tens of thousands of people were shouting 'pig', 'die', or 'you deserve to die!' at him. In the end, all he could do was grab his head and roll around.

"Ugh, aaaaaaaaaaack!!! I want to live too, I also want to live!!! Please save me!!!"

The Continental Emperor shook his head when he saw Minhyuk scream like that. "...It's over."

"Andeiro. That's enough. Stop him from cooking."

"As expected, he's nothing more than a brat."

Adren, one of the gods, shook her head when she heard someone say that Minhyuk was nothing but a brat. Adren, who was beautiful enough to be called the Goddess of Beauty, was once called the God of Benevolence. She had the power to see the pain of another.

She spoke up, "I don't think he's a brat."

"...What did you see?"

"He is suffering from a terrible disease, a disease that forces him to eat and keep on eating even if his stomach is already bulging and he feels like he is about to explode. That's the disease that he has."

"What...?"

"It's like a curse. It's a disease where his body cannot stand the hunger. And it is not something that he can control. Even if his airways are blocked by food and he is at the risk of dying, he will still continue to eat and eat. He has been suffering from that disease for a very long time. It is a very terrible disease that could probably reap the lives of thousands."

The expressions of everyone present turned ugly when they heard those words.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaah! Save me! I want to live! I'm hungry!"

"...Stop the trial." The Continental Emperor shook his head and the others also agreed with him.

Meanwhile, those that did not pay him any heed could only sigh and mumble 'As expected' as they turned to look away. Then, Andeiro grabbed the storage box. Once he placed God's Cursed Ingredients back inside the storage box, everything would be sealed and it would be over.

One of the legends, the Monster Lord, clicked his tongue. "In the end, is there no one talented enough to surpass Food God Allen? Perhaps humans are truly weak..."

When he turned his head while saying those words, the God of Benevolence Adren murmured, "...only... person..."

“What?” The Monster Lord looked at her suspiciously.

Minhyuk, who was rolling on the ground while holding his head, gasped and said, “...will... live...”

Everyone immediately turned to look at Minhyuk. They realized that the words that were coming out of his mouth had changed.

“I will live.”

The words that came out of his mouth were no longer ‘save me’, but ‘I will live’. They watched as Minhyuk supported himself with one hand and struggled to stand up, his eyes shining brightly and with clarity.

“I said, I will live.”

Everyone gaped at him. Adren was looking at Minhyuk in disbelief as he grabbed his cooking utensils and continued cooking.

She recalled that the Monster Lord asked her about the meaning of the words that she murmured earlier. So, Adren gulped dryly while looking at Minhyuk and began, “He...”

Minhyuk moved around busily again.

“He’s the only person that has overcome that disease.”

Chapter 727: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

Minhyuk’s eating addiction struck unexpectedly when he was still in middle school. Before that, he had been living a satisfying life. He had his father, the chairman of Ilhwa Group, and countless friends that trusted and followed him. He also received countless praises for being the only person that would become the next leader of Ilhwa Group.

Minhyuk was someone that lived on the straight path and never strayed. Those that envied him would say, *‘It’s because he met good parents or whatever.’*

Was that really the case though? Minhyuk’s father was not the type of person that would give him everything at his beck and call. His father was a man that made sure to remind him of the lessons that his mother taught him well, and made sure that he would become someone that was resilient.

Also, everything that Minhyuk had achieved was all thanks to his greatest ‘talent’, which was in fact hard work and effort. But when the eating addiction suddenly reared its head, Minhyuk truly suffered a lot.

‘I lost my friends.’

Minhyuk had to tell his friends that he was transferring schools, when in fact, he stayed in his room to try and treat his eating addiction.

‘I let down all the people that had high expectations of me too.’

There were many people that said that the successor, Kang Minhyuk, had gone crazy and ran away while studying. There were even rumors about how Kang Minhoo was an alcoholic and Minhyuk had a hard time because of that.

‘I even lost my fit and healthy body.’

He was overcome with severe depression as his body grew and grew. In the end, he even developed insomnia. He had a hard time sleeping and would only be able to sleep an hour each day. His condition grew worse and worse with each passing day.

‘I want to live. I want to live like ordinary people. I want to eat three meals a day with my family, my friends and perhaps even a lover.’

So, he moved his bloated body and started to move in the pool. He even did sit-ups while lying on his bed whenever he could not sleep. Although he was still fat, he still continued to work out, read his books and study.

‘I will live.’

He jumped and ran with firm determination and worked out for more than four to five hours each day. Minhyuk even desperately tried to control his appetite.

Finally, he met Athenae.

“I will definitely live.”

That was Minhyuk’s dream.

And Minhyuk, who finally stood up after a lot of struggle, began to cook again.

That was why, this fear was nothing to Minhyuk. He could endure, and he would endure.

Minhyuk’s eyes flashed as his entire body felt like it was boiling as he continued to cook the curry. As he continued like that, he began to forget the pain.

‘Brod.’

Minhyuk would definitely feed Brod a warm and delicious meal. Before he knew it, he had already finished cooking the curry. This time, he placed a pot on the stove and poured cooking oil in it. Then, he turned on the stove once again and let the oil’s temperature rise to the appropriate heat.

Just like that, Minhyuk covered the pork sirloin with batter and crumbs while experiencing the pain of his entire body being hacked by an axe.

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

Stagger—

Minhyuk staggered and almost lost his footing. However, he clenched his teeth and held on and slowly stretched his hand out to put the sirloin inside the pot of boiling oil.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Hundreds of lightning bolts fell from the sky and landed on Minhyuk. The sight was terrifyingly grotesque. Although he was receiving an onslaught of attacks, the ingredients and the dish that he was making was completely unaffected.

“Kghhk...!”

The snow, which fell from the sky, suddenly turned into sharp icicles that stabbed through Minhyuk’s body as continued to move to place the meat inside the oil.

“Keuaaaaaaack!” Minhyuk screamed from the pain. However, the figure of the man that he was doing this for flashed in his head.

‘Your Majesty, have you eaten?’

Brod’s face appeared clearly in his head. Minhyuk knew that he had not done anything for the man at all, despite Brod doing a lot for him. So, Minhyuk persevered. He grabbed his trembling wrist with his other hand and forced himself to place the meat inside the oil.

Sizzleeee—

Countless disasters fell upon Minhyuk as the delightful sound of meat being fried rang in the area. Even lava spurt out of the ground and devoured him.

Crackleee—

Sometimes, gigantic rocks would fall from the sky and hit Minhyuk before disappearing, as if they were not there in the first place.

However, strangely enough, they did not pose any threat to Minhyuk, who was now solely focused on the dish that he was cooking. He had completely fallen into a trance.

[You have fallen into a Deep Trance once again.]

[Something special might happen once Trance has been triggered.]

But Minhyuk did not hear these notifications. He was solely focused on cooking. In fact, he did not even notice that his surroundings had been changing constantly as he continued to cook the tonkatsu.

It turned into summer, with scorching heat that reached 50 degrees, then turned into winter, where everything around him turned frozen. Hundreds of lightning bolts fell from the sky while the ground beneath him cracked and shook. However, he did not notice these things. He was completely in his cooking zone. Nothing could stop him.

Finally, a bright and delighted smile popped out on his face as he finished cooking the tonkatsu. He quickly scooped some steaming white rice on a plate before pouring curry in the empty space right next to it. Then, he placed the well-fried tonkatsu above the curry.

At this point in time, Minhyuk already felt dizzy and even his vision had started to spin. In his blurry consciousness, a series of notifications rang in his ears.

[You have completed Curry Rice and Tonkatsu.]

[Something special might happen due to the effects of Trance.]

[Trance. It is a dish that has your will to never back down, a heart for your vassal, a desire to live, and sincerity poured into it.]

[You have achieved Extreme Trance. The buff effects applied and dish grade will be much better than the ordinary Trance!]

[The skill: Trance has changed into Extreme Trance!]

[You have successfully cooked a dish using God's Cursed Ingredient!]

[This is a shocking achievement that even the former Food God has never achieved.]

[You have acquired Food God Specific Skill Points (2).]

[Upon the successful creation of a dish using God's Cursed Ingredient, a God-grade dish will be unconditionally produced!]

[Due to the effects of Extreme Trance, the God-grade dish has become a dish of a higher-grade!]

[You have created the second Absolute God-grade dish in the world!]

[...All stats!]

[...HP and MP!]

[...temporarily...Fallen Wretched Emperor Brod!]

[The Continental Emperor acknowledges...!]

[The Dragon Lord acknowledges...!]

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[The God of Benevolence acknowledges...!]

[You have completed the quest with extraordinary results...!]

Minhyuk was distracted by the notifications that rang non-stop in his ears.

“...”

“...”

“...”

All of the Food God's friends were left speechless. This was especially the case for the Dragon Lord, who had just been speaking rudely and was even saying that he would never acknowledge him. In fact, even his pupils were shaking at the sudden turn of events.

“What did I just see?”

A new grade, the Absolute God-grade dish has been born to the world. It was a shocking and extraordinary achievement that even the former Food God Allen had not attained in his lifetime.

However, even if they had witnessed it, some people still could not help but deny it. The Dragon Lord shook his head.

“Ha...” He smirked, a look of interest flashing on his face as he shook his head and said, “The reason why Allen is the greatest is because he was close to many people.”

Many of them agreed with his words. Even the Monster Lord wanted to deny the scene in front of him and insist that Allen, their friend, was the best.

However, Andeiro opened his mouth and said, “I am someone that can see and view a lot of things even though I stay in this tower.”

Everyone nodded. These souls knew Andeiro since they had seen and interacted with him for quite a long time now.

“That man calls the Continental Emperor Ellie, the person that decided to give up the position of the Sword God to remain the empress of her empire, noona.”

“???”

“He also calls the king of a nation, who is hailed as the Overlord, uncle.”

“???”

“Ah, not too long ago, he established a brotherly relationship with the Mercenary King that united the mercenaries from all over the world and became the God of Mercenaries’ successor.”

“???”

“The temporary commander-in-chief of his kingdom is the Spear God of this era.”

“???”

“This man named Elpis, the Lesser Demon, is the shield of his country. He also has one of the Sword of the Gods as his escort knight. He also has the protection of the Great Demon Gremory and is friends with Saintess Loyna... *mumble, mumble...* Ah! He also has one of the Eight Pillars, Obren, under his command. He also has a deep connection with Pope Kronad. And he also has the Supreme Divine Beast as his pet... *mumble, mumble...*

”

“...”

“...”

Everyone’s expression turned blank for a moment. The Monster Lord looked at Minhyuk and said, “That child... he really needs our help, right?”

“I think so?”

“...”

“...”

Silence enveloped them for a moment.

‘This is the end.’?

That was the thought that flashed in Brod’s head as he looked at the cliff behind him. Standing in front of him was the God of Conflicts Belovan, four other gods, and 250,000 soldiers of the Divine Army. His abdomen was bleeding profusely after he was stabbed by the sword of God of Conflicts Belovan.

However, even though he was in a very dangerous and life-threatening state, Brod still did not let go of his sword.

“Absolute God’s Sword, Fallen Wretched Emperor, this is the end,” Belovan spat coldly. He was so tired and fed up with running after Brod.

‘How can he do this much when he’s just by himself...’

They could not fathom how he was able to cut down 100,000 soldiers of the Divine Army and endure the attacks of three gods. At this point, all Belovan wanted was to get compensated for all the effort that he put in this by killing that bastard. However, he still could not deny the fact that he was under orders to bring Brod back alive.

“I will say this for the last time. The Battle God wants you. Come back to the Battle God’s arms. And he promises you...”

Belovan could not understand. Why was the Battle God so intent on having Brod by his side? Why did he care so much about this man to the point that he promised such a thing?

“...that he will make a new empire for you.”

“...”

The remarks were so shocking to the point that even the soldiers of the Divine Army started to kick up a fuss. The Battle God would go so far as to make an empire in the Land of the Gods for this human? Some of them even gulped dryly, thrilled at the thought alone. If that happened, even the gods would not be able to do anything to him. All kinds of riches and treasures would be waiting for him and he would forever live in peace and comfort.

“Don’t you want it?” Belovan asked.

Brod applied pressure on his bleeding abdomen as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face. “I have felt and realized something after serving someone sincerely.”

“...”

“I don’t really want to be an emperor. Even if I do not become an emperor, I will still be able to live happily. Lately these thoughts have been running through my head.”

Grab—

Brod grabbed his sword tightly and smiled softly. “I don’t mind even if I do not become an emperor. No, instead of me, I hope that *he?* will be the one that will become the emperor.”

‘Your Majesty, my brother, my king.’

The king that smiled brightly when eating his food, the one that hummed softly and patted his stomach in delight after eating his fill.

*“I will only serve *him*.”*

Belovan grabbed his sword tightly. Infuriated, the Battle God ordered to cut him down.

“Then, you have to die,” Belovan declared as he moved to stab Brod’s neck. He then shouted, *“Fool! Your king does not hold you in his heart! You’re nothing but a mere vassal, a tool to be used and abandoned!!!”*

However, Brod smiled widely at Belovan’s words.

‘Yes. That might be the case. Nevertheless...’

“Your Majesty,” Brod called out quietly.

He recalled the words that Minhyuk told him when they met each other the other day.

—Brod. I don’t know what you’re doing. But I’m begging you. Please, please survive and continue to live. Understand?

—Hahaha. Of course, Your Majesty! This servant of yours is the strongest, no?

Brod knew that he would not be able to keep that promise. He was in a very terrible situation. In fact, he did not have any more strength to hold out against them. If one of the soldiers of the Divine Army charged ahead and hit him, he would most definitely collapse.

Still, he just had one small wish.

“...Please remember this servant of yours.”

At that moment, the tip of Belovan’s sword almost reached Brod’s neck. If it were anyone else, it would be unheard of. How could a king remember a dead vassal? There was just no way!

Brod slowly closed his eyes.

Stab—

A chilling sound rang in his ears. With this, he would finally fall into eternal rest.

Drip— drip, drip—

The sound of blood dripping floated in Brod’s ears.

[The lowest God came running for one person and one person alone.]

[The king promises that he will remember his vassal!]

[The king opens his mouth and addresses his vassal!]

“Brod.”

That soft, warm and gentle voice was most definitely His Majesty’s voice. Brod slowly opened his eyes, not daring to believe his ears.

“Ah... Aaaaaaah...”

Brod's heart throbbed and ached. The one standing in front of him was his king. His king held the blade of Belovan's sword tightly, his red blood dripping down on the ground.

“I will remember.”

Brod stretched his trembling hand toward His Majesty. Then, he saw Minhyuk smiled softly and said, “But you have to stay with me for a very long time.”

Chapter 728: The Sage's Tower of Magic

Belovan's expression turned ugly. The lowest god in front was glaring at him while holding onto his sword with one hand. He could not help but gulp dryly at the thick killing intent that he was emitting, despite his wide and round eyes underneath his black hair.

‘They're the same...’

The man in front of him was a human, or to be more precise a human that recently became a god. Brod raised his shaking arms and fussed over the man, worrying about his bleeding hands being cut.

‘How dare a mere Continental God that stands at the lowest...!’

That ‘mere’ Continental God kept his sword at bay. If Belovan had to be honest, this was something that was already shocking. In fact, he did not expect a man with the status of god and king to personally come here just for one mere vassal.

However, even if that was the case, they were still in for trouble.

“Just you?” Belovan snickered.

First, Absolute Gods were strong existences that others could not easily deal with. Besides, there were several gods and around 250,000 soldiers of the Divine Army in this place. Whatever choice he made, whether he ran away with Brod or killed everyone here, the Battle God would still go after them. He was still doomed to die in the end.

“Your Majesty.” Brod was choking up. He also knew how reckless Minhyuk was. Minhyuk told him that he would remember him, however, he had to live and stay with him for a very long time. Although his king told him to live with him for a long time, he knew that he could not do so. Their current situation was too desperate for them to be able to do that.

“Kill the Food God!!!”

“Cut down those that stand up against the Battle God!!!”

“Continental God, you have to pay the price for trying to stop the Battle God's Divine Army!”

It seemed like there was only Minhyuk and Brod standing against hundreds of thousands of enemies. This scene brought along a wide, but creepy, smile on Belovan's face. On the other hand, Brod was thinking about how he could somehow save His Majesty from this predicament.

“I...”

Minhyuk glared sharply, his gaze seen through the gaps of his black hair looked extremely cold. Belovan was startled to see those wide and gentle eyes giving such a cold look.

“...am not alone.”

That was when Belovan saw three weapons hanging on Minhyuk’s neck. The first weapon was a sword.

[The Emperor that commanded the entire continent brandishes his sword for the lowest God!]

[He was the Continental Emperor that united the entire continent!]

The next weapon was a spear shining a bloody red light.

[The greatest God of War in history wields his spear for the lowest God!]

[He was the one that commanded the greatest Heavenly Army!]

At the same time, the space behind Minhyuk opened up to reveal 100,000 soldiers of the Heavenly Army wearing white horned helmets, white armor, and holding shining and brilliant swords in their hands.

Then, the final one, a dagger fashioned out of a monster’s teeth.

[The Father of all of the monsters in the continent raises his sword for the lowest God!]

[He was the one that ruled all of the monsters in the entire continent!]

Just like how the space behind Minhyuk was torn apart, the sky above them also opened up.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

“Kyahaaaaaaaaack!”

“Graaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Dozens of dragons appeared soaring through the skies, unleashing several wide area-of-effect attack magic on the divine army soldiers beneath them.

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

Then, a goddess, beautiful enough to be called the Goddess of Beauty, appeared right beside Brod. She hugged Brod tightly and said, “Did you know?”

The woman’s gentle and warm voice seemed to melt the deep-seated exhaustion and fatigue in Brod’s body.

“Your king has overcome his greatest pain just for you.”

“...”

Brod felt a gush of warmth flood his chest as the God of Benevolence kissed him on the forehead.

[The God of Benevolence’s Barrier]

[No physical force or power will be able to break through the power of this barrier.]

As the barrier appeared and surrounded Brod, the God of Benevolence handed the dish that Minhyuk made to him. "This is a dish that your king has prepared solely for you."

"..."

Brod looked at the dish for a moment before looking at Minhyuk, who was standing with hundreds of legends, pointing their swords, spears and arrows at the enemies, across the barrier. There were even several gods standing beside him and glaring sharply at the Divine Army.

Brod smiled as he looked at Minhyuk's back. "I am glad to be serving him."

The God of Benevolence smiled softly at him when she heard his words. "He is also very happy to have you by his side."

Baaaaaaang—

Minhyuk began to advance together with the hundreds of legends and several gods, and flung God of Conflicts Belovan away. As his white cape fluttered, he gave a command to those that were fighting for him.

"Destroy them."

The Food God's friends, led by Minhyuk, began to push back Belovan, the gods and the troops of the Divine Army.

Baaaaaaaang—

Minhyuk's sword struck Belovan and sent him flying back. Belovan's face was completely ugly.

'How dare these human legends...!'

However, even though they were only human legends, they were all on a completely different level. Just because they were legends did not mean that they were all at a similar level. Each and every single one of them were at the level of a Supreme NPC. The problem was that there were also gods among the Food God's friends.

However, Belovan was not that worried.

'So what if they're here?'

Slaaaaaash—

Belovan's sword moved and slashed the neck of one of the legends.

Crackleee—

The legend, who was in soul form, disappeared into ashes. Belovan was confident that he had the power to kill Minhyuk, Brod and everyone here. In fact, Belovan's level was extremely high. It was at around Level 800, perhaps even higher. Besides, it did not matter even if he lost all his troops here. It was fine since the Battle God would just send another Divine Army to him.

"Sword of Absolute Death."

Swooooooosh—

At that moment, hundreds of sword lights with a 100% probability of hitting his vital points struck Belovan.

“Keuaaaaack!” Belovan screamed involuntarily.

Minhyuk then used ‘Like the Wind’ and appeared right under Belovan’s nose. “Did you think that support troops would come to your aid?”

“...?”

Belovan could not understand his words. That was only natural. After all, the Battle God would never let Minhyuk and Brod go. However, before coming here, Minhyuk had already prepared various items.

“There will be no reinforcements coming here. If you are wiped out here, then this battle will be over,” Minhyuk said, his lips twisting up into a smirk.

Before coming to the Land of the Gods.

Minhyuk finally woke up and had a conversation with Andeiro.

“So, what you mean to tell me is that nothing will change even if I go to Brod right away?”

“That’s right. The one that Brod is fighting right now is God of Conflicts Belovan. He is someone strong enough to be considered as the one standing at the peak of ordinary gods. He is one of the candidates to become an Absolute God. However, you have to know that he is on the Battle God’s side. Even if the Divine Army and the other gods are swept away like that, the Battle God will just continue to send an army as long as he’s alive.”

That was a problem. Even if Minhyuk brought along the Food God’s friends to save Brod and overcame the situation, they would still be left helpless. The Battle God would just continue to throw his forces into chasing after Brod and him. When that happened, they would be left defenseless. After all, the Food God’s friends would not be by their side forever.

“I don’t think killing the Battle God is an option, no?”

“...That’s impossible. The Battle God is hailed as the strongest and greatest among the Absolute Gods.”

Indeed. Minhyuk also thought that it was impossible.

“Then, is there really no other way?”

“No. It’s not like there’s no other method.”

In the first place, Andeiro had suggested that it was possible to save Brod by saying that the way to save him was by getting the help of the Food God’s friends. However, getting the help of the Food

God's friends was just a part of the process. Minhyuk could only save Brod after going through a long and arduous process.

Andeiro said, "I can bring the Battle God here for a moment using a portion of my powers."

"...The Battle God?" Minhyuk looked at Andeiro in surprise.

Who was the Battle God? He was the being that appointed Nerva Sephiroth as the emperor of the Great Luvien Empire. He was also the god that most of the gods in the Land of the Gods served. Perhaps, if Athenae was taken out of the equation, he could be considered as the greatest among all of the gods.

Andeiro did not explain any further. However, Minhyuk understood him perfectly well.

"Please call the Battle God."

"I understand," Andeiro answered as he stood in front of a faceless statue. Then, a wisp of black energy shot out from his staff and entered the statue.

"...Heed my calls."

The power remained in the statue before disappearing. No changes appeared in the statue. Andeiro's expression turned ugly at that. So, he chanted the spell once again and called for the Battle God to come down to this place. However, the Battle God did not respond at all.

"What's the matter?" Minhyuk asked, he could see that Andeiro's tries were fruitless.

"The Battle God is not responding."

"Why?"

"He's ignoring you."

"You said he's ignoring me?"

The one that answered the question was not Andeiro, but Adren the God of Benevolence.

"The Battle God is the greatest among all of the gods. He's not someone that other gods can see just because they wanted to. It doesn't make sense for such a god to come here for you. After all, you are the lowest god."

However, Minhyuk had to meet with the Battle God right at this very moment.

"Andeiro, keep on calling him."

"I understand."

What they were doing felt like they were keeping on calling someone that deliberately did not answer their phone. Still, they would call until the phone was picked up! However, no matter how hard they kept on calling, the Battle God did not respond.

“I don’t think anything would change if you go to save Brod right now,” Andeiro mumbled. He also felt confused. He never expected such a situation to happen. Even the Food God’s friends all looked discouraged by this.

‘Then, what if...’

At that moment, Minhyuk thought of using a trick.

Andeiro quickly noticed that Minhyuk had thought of something. “Did you come up with something?”

Minhyuk told Andeiro about the method that he thought of. The Food God’s friends, who were there with them, looked dumbfounded at what they heard.

“I don’t think the Battle God will accept something so ridiculous?”

“That’s nonsense.”

However, Minhyuk thought differently. There was always a way to get another person to respond.

“Andeiro. Call him one more time.”

“Are you really going to do it?”

Andeiro sighed when he saw Minhyuk nod. *‘I don’t know if it’s going to work but...’*

In the end, a wisp of black energy once again swirled from Andeiro’s staff and entered the statue. Just like before, the statue still did not respond.

But then, using his most wretched and annoying voice, Minhyuk shouted, “Ah, that m*th**f*cker. He must have ran away because he’s scared. That must be the case, no? He must have ran away just now because he’s really scared?”

[The Battle God is descending by his own will!]

Eyes appeared on the blank face of the statue. The Battle God finally responded.

Chapter 729: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

The Battle God was the greatest and most arrogant among the gods. Even the God of Death, who was well-known for his eccentricity, dared not fight against the Battle God. He had the entire Land of the Gods under his control.

However, as he continued to watch Brod, there was something that he could not understand.

‘Why?’

In the past, Brod had competed with Nerva to become the Battle God’s successor. He was sure that the man dreamt of standing in that position too. So, he could not understand why Brod was serving another person now.

‘He’s nothing but the king of humans, the lowest of the Continental Gods, why serve him?’

In the first place, such a person could not possibly hold on to a talent like Brod. So, the Battle God Reached his hand out to Brod.

‘Come to me. Come back to me and bring the world under your rule once again. I will give you one more chance to sit on the emperor’s throne!’

But, Brod never answered his calls. The only thing that he wanted to do was to serve and protect his humble and poor king.

‘What kind of human is he for Brod to act like that?’

The Battle God was very curious. Then, Andeiro asked to see him. The Battle God smirked. A mere human mage was actually trying to summon him. However, there was perhaps something going on. Andeiro kept on calling and asking to meet with him.

‘Doesn’t he know that I might unleash my full wrath upon them if they’re so careless with me?’

The Battle God started to get irritated from the continuous calls and requests. However, he still chose not to respond. In fact, what he wanted to do was scold Andeiro. So, he looked at Andeiro from where he was.

But the person that he saw in front of him was different. There were many many handsome men among the gods, but this man was a cut above the rest. Even if he was placed among many good-looking people, this young and handsome king would still stand out. This allowed the Battle God to recognize his identity right away.

‘So, you’re Brod’s king?’

Who in the world was he? But even though he was curious, the Battle God still did not have any intention of responding.

At that moment, that young and arrogant king said, “Ah, that m*th**f*cker. He must have ran away because he’s scared. That must be the case, no? He must have ran away just now because he’s really scared?”

Prickled, the Battle God did not have any choice but to respond. He immediately descended upon the bronze statue.

The Battle God was a proud, arrogant and great king. Plenty of gods prostrated at his feet and all of the emperors and kings on earth would kneel in front of his successors and descendants.

‘So, who the hell does this king of a kingdom think he is?’

[Battle God’s Wrath.]

[The Battle God’s Wrath is forcing you to your knees!]

[The Battle God’s Wrath will force you to kneel down and worship him!]

All of the souls, even Andeiro, could not hold out against this power and were forced to kneel down one after the other.

“...”

Meanwhile, Minhyuk, with his trembling knees, looked up at the Battle God. However, the Battle God knew that this guy would eventually kneel in front of him.

The Battle God was delighted when he saw the arrogant and impudent king, that was chosen and loved by Brod, slowly bend his knees. That was right, in the end, everyone would bend their knees and prostrate at his feet, let alone the king that Brod served.

However, Minhyuk's cold eyes continued to glare at the smirking Battle God.

"What a joke..."

Minhyuk straightened his knees that were just about to bend.

[The Unyielding One has been triggered.]

[The Candidate for the Eight Pillars is someone that will never give in and yield to anyone!]

.

When everyone yielded and gave in to the Battle God, only Minhyuk remained standing still.

'The power of the Eight Pillars...?' The Battle God was surprised. However, he did not let it show on his expression.

"Lowest God, why did you call for me?"

Minhyuk went straight to the point in reply to his question. "Stop trying to kill Brod."

The Battle God could only laugh at how straightforward Minhyuk was.

'Who are you to dare say something like this to me?'

"I refuse."

"How come?"

"Brod has brought forth a huge mess by blocking the gate connecting the Land of the Gods to earth. He is also responsible for injuring and killing countless soldiers and gods of the Divine Army. He has committed a sin that is worthy of death. It's only right that he receives what he deserves."

"Bullshit."

"..."

'What a truly arrogant and foul-mouthed human. Did this human not think about the consequences of his actions?'

Minhyuk thought differently. *'To get the results that we want, I have to act as wild as I can.'*

"Shall I tell you a fact, then? You want Brod. However, he does not want to go back to you. So, being the petty being that you are, you thought that if you can't have him, then he should just die. Am I right?"

The Battle God did not reply. It was true after all. The Battle God truly wanted Brod by his own side. That was why he sent the Divine Army after him and attacked him. It was all so he could get him. However, the man was strong and stubborn, and had kept on refusing his outstretched hand.

“Even if I’m not here, you will still not get Brod.”

“What are you getting at?”

The Battle God had already decided. No matter what happened after this, he would make sure to rip the mouth of this damn bastard in front of him.

“Do you want to kill me?” Minhyuk asked provokingly. He slowly approached the statue and looked at its face. “You must think that I’m nothing like a god, no?”

That was right. It was quite suffocating and annoying to see a mere Continental God claim themselves to be a true god.

“Why don’t you make a bet with me?”

“A bet?”

Minhyuk was aware that the Absolute Gods liked to make bets. After all, he had already gambled with both the God of Cooking and the God of Will.

“If I can protect Brod from the gods and the Divine Army that you send, then you will no longer interfere with me and Brod.”

The Battle God could only cackle when he heard those words.

‘Does this lowly god not know who I sent? God of Conflicts? Belovan? is my most reliable hunting dog.’

Belovan was not called the God of Conflicts for no reason. In the past wars between the gods, Belovan had killed almost forty gods by himself. Adding on the number of gods and soldiers of the Divine Army there, it would be impossible to protect Brod.

Glance—

His cold eyes glanced around and saw that the legends and gods that dominated the previous era were here. They wanted to go and help Brod? Even if they went, they would not be his men’s opponents.

The Battle God sneered and asked, “Then, what are you going to bet on, the lowest and most insignificant god? Ah, don’t tell me...” The Battle God’s eyes sank deeper. “...are you willing to bet that insignificant position as a god of yours?”

[The God that Commands All of the Armies has made a bet with you!]

[The Battle God offers you a bet to ‘Save Brod’. However, if you fail to do so, you will be stripped of your title as the ‘Food God’.]

Minhyuk had already prepared for this. Just like Andeiro said, to save Brod, they needed to go through a process. The first step was to win the hearts of the Food God’s friends. The second step was to make a bet with the Battle God so he would no longer interfere with Minhyuk and Brod. All that was left was the final step.

‘Brod eating my dish.’

The Absolute God-grade curry rice and tonkatsu had a special power hidden in the dish.

“I accept the bet.”

The friends of the Food God were all legends and gods that commanded the continent and had become the topic of many. However, these very same people were afraid.

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

With every swing of Belovan’s sword, hundreds of the Heavenly Army and monsters disappeared without a trace.

Slaaaash—

To everyone’s dismay, the man that was hailed as the greatest swordsman of all time got his neck cut down, dying with his soul scattering into nothingness. But Belovan did not stop there. He threw the sword with all his might.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

“Food God’s successor... ”

The Continental Emperor looked at Minhyuk sadly, the sword thrown by Belovan piercing through his chest.

“I hope you achieve what you want.”

“...”

Clench—

Minhyuk clenched his palms into fists. Belovan was far too strong. Even the soldiers of the Divine Army that fought together with him were also very strong. The legends were not even at a level where they could leave a scratch on them.

“Keuhahahahahahaha! Where’s that arrogant look of yours earlier, huh?!”

Flaaaaash—

Just like leaves falling in autumn, the legends fell one after another under Belovan’s sword. After killing his way, he charged at Minhyuk at the speed of light.

Minhyuk blocked the first attack and moved to try and block the next attack.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—

However, although Belovan only swung his sword once, the attack pierced through Minhyuk’s entire body.

[Your HP has dropped below 60%!]

[Your movements are temporarily restricted after being stabbed through several places all at once!]

Minhyuk’s face turned ugly. He had never faced anyone this strong. It was not only his swordsmanship, he even had a special passive that ignored artifact effects as well as various powerful active skills.

‘...He’s a monster, right?’

Belovan stepped back and swung his sword once again. At that moment, hundreds of sword lights stretched out from his sword and pointed toward the 100 legends. It was strength that could make anyone despair.

“Continental God.” Belovan grinned arrogantly. “And Brod.”

He wanted to show how foolish they were to try and stand up against the Battle God.

“Look carefully at how your king dies.”

Belovan’s special skill unfolded.

Lethal Exploding Sword.

A powerful force shot toward Minhyuk from Belovan’s sword.

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

[Lethal Exploding Sword]

[The attack has a 15,000% additional damage that will unfold the moment the attack lands on your target. There will also be a powerful explosion that would erupt seven times in your opponent’s body.]

The attack came at the speed of light. Minhyuk could tell that it was too fast for him to stop. However, even if that was the case, there was still a small smile lingering on his face.

“Brod.” Minhyuk looked back. “How is the food?”

The Battle God knew that Belovan’s Lethal Exploding Sword was powerful enough to kill several gods. Still, he watched the battlefield along with several other Absolute Gods. There were even several of them that favored Minhyuk. Why were they there? Well, it was so they could give him strength the moment he won the bet.

“The God that Loves to Cook. The God that Never Backs Down.” The Battle God looked at them and snickered. “I feel very sorry for you. Why do you expect something from a mere Continental God?”

Arlene, the God of Cooking, said, “It would be good for you to not underestimate Minhyuk or think as if he’s a simple human being.”

Even the God of Will, the man that never backed down, added, “He is the toughest and most amazing human I have ever seen in my life.”

In response, the Battle God just laughed, “In the end, he’s nothing but a mere human. Hahahahaha!”

That man would be deprived of his position as a god and Brod, the man that left the Battle God’s side, would die.

“It’s not yet over,” the God of Cooking mumbled softly, a smile adorning her face.

That was when they heard Minhyuk's voice.

[Brod, how is the food?]

Then, a man answered his question.

[It was very delicious.]

“...”

The Battle God turned to look at the scene. There, he saw Brod, the Absolute God's Sword, standing in front of Minhyuk with a kind and gentle smile on his face.

[Your Majesty.]

Brod looked at the Lethal Exploding Sword coming at Minhyuk before turning to look back at his king.

[This is the power that this vassal of yours once had. Today, Your Majesty has allowed me to display this power once again, even if for a short time.]

Then, Brod slashed his sword down.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The moment his sword met with the Lethal Exploding Sword, Belovan's skill fluttered in the air until it became a soft and gentle breeze.

“...!”

Only then did the Battle God realize once again why he wanted to have Brod so badly. This was because Brod was extremely powerful. He was powerful enough that even the God of Conflicts Belovan was no match against him.

“No way...!”

Arlene said, “The dish that that human child made has a variety of effects. One of them is none other than awakening the power that Brod wielded in the past.”

“...!”

The Battle God's eyes grew wide. Then, Brod, who completely offset the Lethal Exploding Sword, spoke out again.

[Your Majesty.]

He knelt down on one knee and looked up at his king.

[This servant of yours once dreamt of becoming an emperor.]

Minhyuk nodded.

[I will act rudely and become an emperor today in front of Your Majesty. I am hoping for your kind understanding and consideration?]

Minhyuk nodded softly as Brod smiled at him.

Then, at that moment, the God of Will opened his mouth and said, “Did you forget?”

“...”

“You had two suns. You did not need to speak to us to brag about them.”

“...”

“However, one of your two suns burned so brightly to the point that you feared him every so often.”

“...”

“From what I remember, that sun’s name was Brod. And he is now burning at his brightest.”

The Battle God’s pupils shook. That was right. He wanted Brod but he also feared him. That was why he had turned a blind eye when Nerva resorted to trickery and killed Brod’s knights. If he were to be honest, Nerva’s Swords of the Gods were far weaker than Brod’s Swords of the Gods.

Flash—

Light flashed in the space in front of Brod. When it faded, it revealed the figure of Mage Andeiro, who was wearing a cape carrying the symbol of the wolf. Andeiro pointed his staff at Belovan’s neck.

But that was not the end.

Flash—!

When the light faded away, more than twenty knights appeared, with their swords raised and pointed at Belovan’s neck.

These were the ‘Red Sword Knights’, the knights that grew under Brod’s careful care and nurturing, that once transcended the other Swords of the Gods.

Chapter 730: The Sage’s Tower of Magic

Brod pondered over the words that the God of Benevolence told him.

—*Your king has overcome his greatest pain just for you.*

He looked down at the curry rice and tonkatsu that was placed in front of him. He was sure that Minhyuk must have gone through and overcome unimaginable pain, hardships, and trials, while making this dish.

The still-steaming curry rice and tonkatsu set was complete with side dishes like savory and salty seaweed, chopped kimchi, pickled radish, tonkatsu sauce, and many more. The sight of these dishes alone brought a gush of warmth in Brod’s chest as he quickly blew on the steam.

“Hoo... Let’s try it.”

This was a dish that His Majesty had worked hard to make. Brod looked at the rice piled up on one side of the plate as he scooped a spoonful of the curry placed right next to it and mixed them together. Then, he scooped a mouthful and placed it in his mouth.

“Ho.”

The taste naturally brought out a breath of admiration from his mouth. This was the taste of curry that had been well-cooked and stewed for quite some time.

With a pleased smile on his face, Brod began to mix all of the curry and the rice in his plate. After mixing them together, he began to scoop one spoonful after another in his mouth.

Munch, munch, munch—

The small smile on his face grew deeper as he continued to eat. This time, he turned his attention to the crispy tonkatsu, cutting a piece and placing it in his mouth.

Crunch—

Brod was pleasantly surprised at the texture of the tonkatsu. Then, he added a piece of tonkatsu along with his curry rice. The thick and rich flavor of the curry complemented the tonkatsu perfectly.

‘His Majesty told me that the best way to eat curry rice is to eat it this way.’

Brod scooped a mouthful of curry rice and placed a piece of salty seaweed on top of it before putting everything in his mouth.

‘This is quite a strange, yet delicious, combination.’

Then, while admiring the taste lingering in his mouth, he dipped the tonkatsu in the tonkatsu sauce and ate everything just like that.

Scrape— scrape—

Not long after, the sound of a spoon scraping the bottom of the plate rang loudly. Brod felt like this was the most delicious dish he had ever eaten in his entire life. In fact, he felt that it was even more special, since His Majesty had put in a lot of hard work and effort in making this dish.

That was when the notifications rang in his ears.

[You have eaten Curry Rice and Tonkatsu.]

[The dish is Absolute God Grade.]

[Your Mercenary’s Pinnacle Swordsmanship’s level has increased by +3.]

[Your HP and MP has recovered to 100%.]

[All of your skill cooldown has been reset.]

[The sealed power of the Fallen Emperor has been awakened.]

[You will be able to summon the members of your knight order that has greeted death.]

[You will be able to summon the army that you once led.]

.

[The buff will last for a week.]

Brod could not help but be surprised.

‘Is this the power of His Majesty’s Create a Recipe skill...?’

Brod knew that the ‘Create a Recipe’ skill was a skill that would allow Minhyuk to create the recipe of a dish that the recipient wanted to eat the most. It also was a skill that could find out what power the opponent wanted the most at that moment, and increase it. What shocked him the most, was that it was an Absolute God-grade dish.

Brod moved after seeing Belovan send his Lethal Exploding Sword toward Minhyuk.

A long time ago, there were two suns that existed in the sky. One was Brod, stronger than anybody else and loved by the people in the Land of the Gods. And the other was Nerva, the clever genius that brought countless benefits to the land.

Each of them had a knight order under their command. Nerva named his knight order as the ‘Swords of the Gods’, while Brod named his own as the ‘Red Swords’. The Red Sword Knights had always been superior to the Swords of the Gods. Since they grew under the careful teaching and nurturing of the Absolute God’s Sword Brod, it was only natural that they became strong. However, most of them were killed when Nerva poisoned them, while those that survived scattered all over the world and lived in seclusion.

[The Fallen Wretched Emperor Brod has once again risen to the sky and became the sun!]

[Brod’s radiance as the sun has started to shine brighter and hotter than ever!]

[The souls of the members of Brod’s Red Sword Knights answer his call!]

Flash—!

Andeiro, who appeared with a flash of light, felt deeply moved as he pointed his staff at the neck of the God of Conflicts Belovan.

‘It’s an honor to be able to fight by your side once again.’

Flash—!

Andeiro slowly opened his closed eyes after the flash of light disappeared. There, he saw his comrades who died an unjust death, the honest knights that had only served one master, pointing their swords at Belovan’s neck.

One was holding his sword lightly while laughing at Belovan. There was also the female knight, Haley, holding her sword with both hands. Another one had even opted to position himself right behind Belovan, so he could attack him from the back.

Oh, how Andeiro missed each and every single one of them. These were the comrades that he cried, laughed and fought with! The people that served Brod alongside him!

These people, who were greater and stronger than any other Swords of the Gods of the present, declared loudly.

“Your Majesty! Please give us your orders!”

“Your Majesty! Please give us your orders!”

Brod's body was wrapped in light as a crown that emitted a bright red light hovered above him before landing lightly on his head. Even his shabby sword had started to glow with a red light, as a red armor and red cape carrying the symbol of a black wolf appeared on Brod's body.

Brod looked behind him, before turning back around to face Belovan.

Thud—! Thud—! Thud—! Thud—!

The space behind him was torn apart as hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the Divine Army wearing red armor marched out.

“...”

Minhyuk's breath was caught in his throat. He was left completely speechless after seeing the level of the knights that appeared in front of him.

[Red Sword Knight Haley. Level 732.]

[Red Sword Knight Rocan. Level 763.]

[Red Sword Knight Cardin. Level 746.]

[Red Sword Knight...]

The level of the knights easily surpassed the level of the Swords of the Gods. But the surprise did not end there.

[Soldier Akkan. Level 485.]

[Soldier Fergon. Level 445.]

[Centurion Jen. Level 501.]

[Mage Luanma. Level 453.]

“...”

Their strength was completely unbelievable. They were so strong that Nerva Sephiroth's own army would be completely overshadowed if they were placed side by side.

Brod, their master, looked back at Minhyuk and gave a warm smile. Then, he looked forward, his expression twisting and turning ferocious as he spat coldly, “Destroy them.”

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

At that moment, the Red Sword Knights moved to attack Belovan. Meanwhile, Brod's army released a rain of arrows and magic that devoured the Battle God's Divine Army.

Of course, Brod could not be left behind. He charged forward and cut down one of the gods with his sword that was emitting a bright red light. His opponent was completely powerless in front of Brod.

Slaaaaash—!

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!”

Brod did not stop after killing one god. He continued even further and ran toward the god that was right behind the first one.

“Mercenary’s Pinnacle Swordsmanship. Final Chapter,” Brod spat coldly as he leapt to the sky with his cold and sharp glare. “Wolf’s Death.”

More than a thousand bloody red sword lights shot out and devoured the god, tearing him apart completely as several explosions bloomed around him.

Immediately after that, Andeiro stabbed his staff on the ground. “Earth Quake.”

Rumbleeeeeeee—

The ground split in half, forcing many of the soldiers of the divine army to fall into the gap.

Flash—

Andeiro leapt to the sky, his staff shining brightly above them.

“Meteor.”

Then, several gigantic Meteors fell on the ground.

Booooooooooom—

The moment the Meteors made contact with the ground, they devoured and destroyed everything.

Helplessness. This was what Belovan, the gods, and the Divine Army felt as they were pushed back so easily. However, the fact that Belovan was strong could not be denied. He still stood firm even though he was dealing with twenty Red Sword Knights by himself.

Slaaash—

Belovan’s sword slashed toward Knight Haley’s flanks as he gritted his teeth. *‘Is this your true power?’*

To be honest, Belovan once admired Brod. He had heard a story before he became a god, a story about a man that conquered the entire Land of the Gods with a single sword alone. Belovan grew up and chased after that man. After all this time, he had no doubt that he was stronger than Brod.

“Brooooooooooooood!!!” Belovan shouted, his eyes turning bloodshot. “Fight me!!!”

This was God of Conflicts Belovan’s dream.

Brod allowed the Red Sword Knights to step back and hunt the soldiers of the Divine Army instead.

“Haa... haa...”

Belovan was known to be an absolute being in terms of swordsmanship in the Land of the Gods. In fact, even the Absolute Gods feared his existence!

Belovan gripped his sword tightly as he charged at Brod the moment he saw the man approach him.

Minhyuk, who was watching the scene, thought, *‘Belovan will absolutely...’*

Then, their swords clashed.

Clang— clang, clang, clang, clang, clang—

Dozens of sword strikes were released per second as Belovan tried to press Brod back with all his might. He aimed for the neck, the abdomen, his lower body, everywhere! Belovan attacked everywhere, yet Brod fended all of his attacks with just one hand.

Slash—

The counterattack came incredibly fast, with Brod slashing Belovan's shoulder.

Spurt—

Then, he slashed his flanks.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab!

Brod's sword went through Belovan's body numerous times, and Minhyuk could not help but admire Brod.

'Belovan will absolutely not win against Brod.'

The most conclusive evidence to this statement was because of Brod's level.

[Brod. Level 891.]

"..."

Brod's level made Minhyuk speechless. With Brod regaining his powers as the emperor, Belovan would not be able to hold a candle to him. In the end, Belovan was forced to his knees, his body completely covered in blood from Brod's attacks.

'I... I didn't even succeed in landing a single attack...?'

Deeply frustrated, Belovan wondered what kind of position the human king had assigned to Brod for him to follow and trust him so much.

"What position do you have in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...?"

"I'm the Commander-in-chief."

"..."

That seemed only natural. What other position would he hold other than being a commander-in-chief? But, it was practically a waste for someone like him to not sit on a throne. Was Brod telling them that he was satisfied with just being a commander-in-chief?

Then, Brod said, "Well, that's actually just my side job."

"...?"

"If we're talking about my main job, then I'm a livestock farmer. I raise cows, pigs, chickens and the like."

"...?"

At that moment, Belovan had a horrifying thought, *'I lost to a livestock farmer?'*

"How can you blatantly tell lies like that...!" Belovan shouted, blood gurgling from his throat.

However, Brod just smiled and shook his head. When he looked around, he saw that the Divine Army was already being sorted out. Then, he turned to look back at Minhyuk and opened his mouth.

The other Absolute Gods kept their mouths shut as the Battle God watched Belovan collapse helplessly on the ground. Brod turned around and walked slowly toward Minhyuk. The Battle God felt an ache deep in his chest as he watched Brod.

Then, Brod, who was walking slowly, opened his mouth.

[I serve him not because I want to get something in return.]

Brod did not choose the Battle God, the greatest among all of the Absolute Gods. He spoke out, his voice echoing loudly in the area and striking deep within the hearts of those that heard it.

[I serve him because I feel happy, perhaps sometimes sad too, by his side.]

The situation was finally sorted and the notifications rang in the ears of the Battle God.

[You have lost the bet with Food God Minhyuk.]

[You can no longer force or exert any sort of influence on Brod.]

Brod carefully took out a handkerchief and tied Minhyuk's hand, the hand that he used to grab Belovan's sword earlier.

There were many reasons why the Battle God wanted to have Brod so badly. The first was because he felt that it was a pity that such a loyal and faithful man had turned his back on him. And the second was because Brod would become an ordinary human. Unlike when he was still the Absolute God's Sword, he would only have a limited time left to live as a human.

*'You'll only have a few years at most. Do you think that will be okay? Yet... yet you still chose to serve that human king?!'?*The Battle God had asked him.

Brod just continued to carefully tie Minhyuk's hands with the handkerchief. After doing that, he gently wrapped the boy's hands in his and looked up at him with a warm and bright smile on his face.

[Your Majesty.]

Minhyuk looked at Brod, returning a smile of his own.

[This servant of yours will only serve you, Your Majesty.]