

Gourmet 731

Chapter 731: The Sage's Tower of Magic

In Athenae, NPCs usually became the actual owners of the land, while players lived as 'foreigners'. Because of that, even the officials and operators of Joy Co. Ltd. had a hard time predicting what would happen next. Of course, it was not all of the time, but there were cases where their predictions would go wrong.

The Sorrowful Grave of the Dead. This was a place where legends, who had once made their names known all over the world and had died an unjust death, were laid to rest. A man dressed in what seemed to be torn and ragged royal robes arrived at this place.

"Haa... Haaa..."

The man was none other than Prince Aegon, the First Prince of the Faller Kingdom. Faller Kingdom was one of the few nations that did not give in to the Great Luvien Empire. As a kingdom that had its share of powerful people, the Faller Kingdom did not want to become another's puppet.

King Aephiro rejected the Great Luvien Empire, and the results of his actions were terrible. In just two weeks, more than half of his kingdom had been razed to the ground while many of his people died. King Aephiro was slain and most of the royal family was hunted down and exterminated.

In hopes of chasing down a legend that had been passed down in the royal family, Prince Aegon came running to the Sorrowful Grave of the Dead. For days on end, he had taken many twists and turns, avoiding the eyes of the Imperial Army before finally arriving here.

'An army that even the gods fear will awaken for the sake of the Faller Kingdom.' Prince Aegon continued to ponder about the legend that had been passed down in the family.

In Joy Co. Ltd. conference room, all of the board members including President Kang Taehoon were looking at the screen.

"Did I predict wrongly again..." President Kang Taehoon muttered bitterly while the other board members looked at Prince Aegon on the screen nervously.

The one that was sleeping in that place was a unique entity.

"One of the Six Monster Gods, God of Birth Gaerna."

Everyone groaned when they heard the words of one of the board members.

The strongest and the greatest among the Six Monster Gods was 'Obren'. In fact, he was the only one among the Six Monster Gods that was a part of the Eight Pillars.

However, just because he was the strongest did not mean that he was the most difficult to deal with. Those were two very different things. If everyone present was asked to choose which of the Six Monster Gods was the most difficult one to deal with, then they would all choose Gaerna. That was how tricky Gaerna was.

"Gaerna is also the being that could cause a lot of problems in Athenae."

Gaerna was completely different from the Corrupted God and the God of Snakes Elizabeth.

“Gaerna is originally set to unseal herself in a year or so. Upon awakening, the episode ‘Gaerna’s Army’ will start.”

The episode, ‘Gaerna’s Army’ closely resembled an event. It would turn into a quest that would be given to all of the players at every corner of the world, and allow them to accumulate contributions. Three days after Gaerna’s awakening, the players would then have to vote for the ‘Alliance’s King’.

‘The king of the Allied Forces will receive a dramatic increase in all of their stats and skills.’

At the same time, the Alliance’s King must be able to unite all of the players.

However, it seemed that Gaerna was going to be awakened less than a year before her intended time. It did not matter how dramatic the increase in skills and stats would be, whoever would become the Alliance’s King would be facing a tough fight.

“What will happen if they can’t stop her?” One of the board members asked.

Meanwhile, on the monitor, Prince Aegon cried out in anguish.

[The One that ruled the greatest army! I am Faller Kingdom’s First Prince Aegon! This is the time to make good of the promise that you left us in the past! Awaken for me!]

Everything that he thought was wrong. The legend that had been passed down in the Faller Kingdom’s royal family was false. Gaerna would not help them. She was a creature that would use her power to bring the world to the pits of despair if she awakened.

[Shwaaaaaaaaack—!]

A black wisp of energy shot up and swirled around Prince Aegon until it completely covered his body.

[Crack, crack, crack, crack—]

[Crunch— Crunch— Crunch— Crunch—]

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Prince Aegon’s blood spurted all over the place, his flesh tearing apart as his bones broke in loud cracks, one after another. In the place where Prince Aegon once stood appeared Gaerna. She had the face of a dragonfly with a single horn protruding on her forehead, the wings of a butterfly and the legs of a mantis. Gaerna’s eyes narrowed into crescents as she looked around.

[I’m hungry.]

Kang Taehoon could only remain silent, unable to answer the board member’s question as he continued to stare at the monitor. It was Team Leader Park Minggyu who answered on his behalf, “Perhaps more than half of the territories in Athenae would disappear.”

[A sealed monster has awakened to the world.]

[The God of Birth Gaerna has descended!]

[The ones that successfully kill God of Birth Gaerna will receive great rewards.]

The world was turned upside down with the sudden appearance of one of the Six Monster Gods. In the Battlefield of the Gods, the players had witnessed the dignity and majesty of the 'Corrupted God', and were now fully aware of how dangerous the Six Monster Gods were.

Because of that, the entire continent was in a buzz.

[Breaking News. One of the Six Monster Gods, Gaerna, has appeared.]

[Breaking News. Will the nightmare that the Corrupted God had brought upon the Battlefield of the Gods be reproduced?]

[According to the experts, Food God Minhyuk was only able to kill the Corrupted God because he had the help of 'Obren'...]

The world was plunged in fear. They have not yet gotten over the nightmare that the Corrupted God had brought upon them when she massacred the god-class players one after another.

But then, at that moment, two kingdoms had made a declaration with great confidence.

[Breaking News. Rothschild Kingdom's King Calauhel has declared that he will hunt one of the Six Monster Gods, Gaerna, in a press conference.]

[Breaking News. Qingdao Kingdom's King Xu Jiaqi has declared a temporary alliance with the Rothschild Kingdom.]

[Their goal? To hunt one of the Six Monster Gods.]

[Calauhel has hired the world's strongest rankers and mercenaries. Among them, there are some players that have participated in the Battle of the Thrones and sat on their own thrones in the past.]

[The world has begun to gather around the alliance created by the Rothschild Kingdom and Qingdao Kingdom.]

[Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi have expressed their confidence...]

The Rothschild Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom had been established after the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and the Maserrati Kingdom.

Calauhel had been using his tremendous financial power to attract people to his country, while Xu Jiaqi received the support of the Chinese people. In fact, these two kingdoms had been growing so fast in terms of population and had almost caught up with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. That was why both Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi were confident.

'We will kill one of the Six Monster Gods, just like how the Beyond the Heavens' King has killed one.'

'There's no way that we can fail in taking one down.'

There were around 500,000 cavalry men from the Allied Army created between the Rothschild Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom stationed along the route that Gaerna was supposed to pass through.

Calauhel thought, *'This is an opportunity for us to attract a lot of players.'*

'We might be able to crush Beyond the Heavens' prestige and soar to the top.'

Calauhel drew his imposing sword and cried, "Victory will be ours! We will carve a new legend in Athenae!!!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaah!!!"

The 500,000-strong army, composed of both NPCs and players, marched to where Gaerna was. Alas, half a day after they started marching, devastating news began to flood the screens of all of the people of the world.

[Breaking News. The Allied Army from the Rothschilde Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom has been annihilated.]

[Breaking News. Xu Jiaqi and Calauhel were only able to barely survive, retreating to create a defensive line...]

[Breaking News. A 500,000-strong army has fallen while facing the disaster brought about by Gaerna.]

The entire world was terrified after learning the fact that the allied forces were defeated almost effortlessly.

Battered, bruised and barely able to survive, Xu Jiaqi and Calauhel quickly rushed back and tried to form a defensive line. Gaerna was headed for the Rothschilde Kingdom.

Faelbert Fortress.

"This is impossible..."

Calauhel was currently brainstorming with Xu Jiaqi. The two of them had witnessed Gaerna's power personally. Even though they had a huge army with them, it was all useless in front of Gaerna's power.

Calauhel had spent a huge amount of money to complete Faelbert Fortress. It was said to be the greatest fortress created and built by a player. The two, Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi, listened to the constant reports and news inside this fortress.

"The 150,000 soldiers that fought in Pager Gorge have been wiped out..."

"The 100,000 soldiers sent to the Akhad River have also been wiped out."

"According to reports, the 150,000 soldiers of the Ruacard Kingdom have been wiped out."

"Reports have also stated that the 200,000 soldiers of the Piennot Empire have been wiped out."

The empires and kingdoms from all over the world were also fighting to restrain Gaerna. However, the only news that came to them was of their defeat.

Fortunately, the global top rankers that Calauhel had hired with his money were all still in good condition. This was because he did not put them in the frontline just in case something unexpected happened.

“What’s the current number of our forces?”

“We have around 600,000 troops.”

“...”

The first Allied Army, with 500,000 soldiers, had been wiped out in just half a day. At that moment, Calauhel realized, *‘Perhaps the Rothschild Kingdom will fall today?’*

That was when the face of one man flashed in his head.

‘This is the first time that I ever wanted to see that damn bastard.’

[Your vassal, Brod, has offered his life to you and vowed to live only for your sake.]

[You can both feel the deep bond that connects you two.]

Minhyuk was pleased to hear such notifications ring in his ears as he helped Brod stand up. At the same time, additional notifications rang in his ears.

[You have won the bet against the Battle God.]

[The Battle God will no longer be able to force or exert any sort of influence on Brod.]

He did it! Minhyuk went through a lot of complicated and difficult steps and finally succeeded in saving Brod!

Meanwhile, Brod looked around the countless corpses of the gods and the soldiers of the Divine Army. There was also God of Conflicts Belovan, who was on his knees and in despair.

“Collect the spoils of war.”

At Brod’s orders, his men, the very same men that he had not met for a very long time, rushed forward to retrieve all of the spoils of war. It did not even take them that long.

Then, Brod said, “Your Majesty, although these are lowly items, this servant of yours is offering them all to you.”

[You have gained 141,413 platinum.]

[You have obtained 751 Divine Army’s Sharp Swords.]

[You have obtained 786 Divine Army’s Shiny Armor.]

[...obtained Belfan’s Necklace.]

[...obtained Condoro’s Armor.]

Minhyuk looked satisfied as he listened to the notifications that continuously rang in his ears. Then, he looked at Brod, his ever upright and strong vassal.

‘Thank you. Thank you so much.’

Minhyuk was truly grateful to him. He was grateful that Brod had been protecting him from the dangers that he was completely unaware of. Of course, Brod was also looking at his king gratefully. His king had cooked for him and even went through several trials and hardships for his sake.

Then, at that moment, voices rang from the ground beneath them. The voice sounded different from the usual God's Voice. It was a far more special story that was narrated by the Battle God himself.

[The greatest among the gods had turned a blind eye to the sufferings of his most noble and kind knight.]

Minhyuk and Brod both turned tense. After all, the deal stipulated that the Battle God was only restricted from interfering with Brod, but not with Minhyuk. Was he going to play dirty tricks just like that?

Then, a line appeared in the air above them, creating the picture of a man turning a blind eye to the sufferings of his own servant and vassal, then it slowly scattered in the wind.

[The abandoned knight met a new master and finally held his sword again to fight for him.]

Another picture was drawn in the air. This time, it was the figure of the knight standing tall in front of countless enemies that were approaching from a distance.

[The great god, the very same god that abandoned him, coveted the knight once again, longing for and wanting him to stay by his side.]

[But the abandoned knight only fought for his new master, fighting recklessly despite the risk of dying for the sake of his new king.]

The picture in the air started to move as if it was alive. It showed how the knight fought valiantly against hundreds of thousands of enemies, winning by the skin of his teeth each and every single time.

[The knight's new master set aside everything and ran for his knight.]

This time, the picture showed the knight's new master handing over the dish that he made to his knight.

[At that moment, the great god realized that the two of them had something that he did not have with the knight before.]

[He realized that no trial or hardship could stop the two of them together.]

The picture changed once again. Standing at the center of hundreds of thousands of corpses, the knight and his new master looked at each other. Then, the two smiled at each other and turned around to walk away.

[The knight met a new master.]

Then, the figure of a person silently watching the departing back of the master and the knight was drawn in the air. The newly drawn man had a bitter expression on his face as he watched the two leave. In the end, the man also turned around and walked in the opposite direction from the two of them.

Ring!

[May the two of you stay by each other's side for a very long time.]

[The Battle God has given you his first blessing!]

[All of your stats have increased by 2%!]

Ring!

[May the two of you overcome countless trials and hardships together.]

[The Battle God has given you his second blessing!]

[You have gained 1 God's SP!]

Ring!

[May the two of you experience joy and sadness together.]

[The Battle God has given you his third blessing!]

[Your HP and MP volume have increased by 10%!]

Ring!

[May the two of you become myths and legends together.]

[The Battle God has given you his fourth blessing!]

[You have acquired the Battle God's Treasure Box!]

[You have acquired one God's Summons Parchment!]

The picture once again moved to show the faces of the knight and the master. The two were looking at each other with bright and wide smiles on their faces.

Finally, the Battle God left one more sentence.

[I sincerely wish you all the best.]

The Battle God, who was walking in the opposite direction, had a bitter expression on his face. However, there was a small imperceptible curve at the corners of his lips.

Chapter 732: God of Birth Gaerna

After the Gaerna Hunt episode was released, the video of the defeat of the allied forces led by the Rothsilde Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom quickly became ZTube's 'Best Video of the Week'.

The leading BJs from all over the world were left speechless after watching this video.

Click—

Someone gulped dryly as they clicked on the video with hundreds of millions of views, prompting the video to start.

[You can feel the burning passion from the 500,000 soldiers that gathered around Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi.]

[The Allied Army that Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi gathered this time has many legends and strongmen sent as support by various kingdoms and empires from all over the continent.]

[Calauhel is the head of the Rothschilde Family. He has immeasurable amounts of money. He exchanged a portion of that money into gold to hire many legendary NPCs and mercenaries.]

[Master Reflector Xu Jiaqi has received the enthusiastic support of the Chinese people. She was originally the leader of the dark gamer guild Black Dragon Order. Dark gamers play games for a living and there are many top players among them. When she established her kingdom, many of the dark gamers knocked on the doors of her kingdom.]

[There's one thing that I can tell you. Even one of the Six Monster Gods would not be able to deal with the army gathered here so easily.]

These were the commentators' observations.

In the video, Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi climbed on their horses and looked at the approaching Gaerna arrogantly. Gaerna had a grotesque appearance. Anyone that took a look at her dragonfly face, mantis lower body, and the butterfly wings on her back would most definitely have goosebumps on their skin.

[God of Birth. Gaerna. Not much has been revealed yet about Gaerna's power.]

[That's why the Allied Army seems tense as they approach carefully.]

Finally, Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi sent forth 30,000 cavalry as vanguard. There were also tens of thousands of mages and archers standing behind them for support.

"Fire!!!" Xu Jiaqi cried as tens of thousands of arrows and magic rained down on Gaerna and exploded.

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

"I'm... hungry."

From what it looked like, Gaerna did not receive any damage from the explosive magic and arrows.

"I'm huuuuuuuuungry!"

Gaerna's mandibles opened widely as her loud and tearful cry resounded in the area. Then, the tens of thousands of arrows and magics that were raining down on her body were sucked into her mouth.

[Huh...]

The moment one of the commentators voiced their confusion, Gaerna spread her butterfly wings and soared above the Allied Army.

"...!"

"...!"

No one had been able to sense when she made a move. Gaerna's dragonfly eyes scanned them.

"Looks... delicious..."

At the same time, the tens of thousands of arrows that Gaerna swallowed before poured out of her mouth.

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

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

“Keuhaaaaaaaaack!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaack!”

“Ugh, aaaaaaaaaack!”

“Keooooooooook!”

The Allied Army was caught off-guard by the sudden bombardment of arrows and magic from the sky. Master Reflector Xu Jiaqi hurriedly used her reflecting ability to try and return the bombardment, but with one swish of Gaerna’s wings, her skills disappeared into nothingness.

In just an instant, around 20,000 of the Allied Army forces died. Then, something bizarre happened. The players that died were supposed to turn into ashes and disappear into nothingness. However, their bodies remained intact.

“God of Birth Gaerna... No way!” Calauhel mumbled, furrowing his brow as he realized something.

“Uweeeeeeeeeeeck!” Gaerna vomited something that fell on the dead members of the Allied Army.

What did Gaerna vomit? Nothing other than larvae. The larvae had the color of human skin, while their faces varied. Some were yellow, some were blue, and some were red. Regardless of their colors, they each moved to find the head of the corpses and dug into their flesh to eat their brains. At that moment, those that had fallen and died stood up once again.

There were also quite a few Korean players among the members of the Allied Army. One of the players, who had joined the alliance with his friend, called out to his friend. The problem was that his friend’s brain had already been eaten by the larvae.

“Min... Min-Seok...”

Stab—

In response, the man named Min-Seok stabbed his friend with his sword without any hesitation.

“Damn it!!!”

In an instant, the 20,000 allies had turned into enemies.

“Click, click, click!”

“Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick!”

“Krrrrrrrrrrr!”

Those that had been afflicted with the parasites could no longer speak and could only make inarticulate, insect-like sounds. But that was not all. Their strength had grown by around 10~20% while their defenses increased by at least 30%. Fortunately, they were not able to use skills or magic.

However, that was *still* not the biggest problem.

“You, you can’t die!!!”

“We can’t die!!!”

It was the fact that they could not die on the battlefield. Otherwise, they would be ‘revived’ and turned into those creatures. However, it was impossible to not die on such a chaotic battlefield. On top of that, Gaerna would never let them go.

“Urk...!”

Every time Gaerna let out a weird cough, hundreds of moths would come out of her mouth and cling to the bodies of the members of the Allied Army.

Sizzleeeee—

Someone’s arm slowly started to melt.

“A, aaaaaaaaaack!”

Another was subjected to an abnormal status and lost their vision.

“Keheok! My, my body has become weak!”

Someone lost the strength in their body.

Just like that, the number of their enemies continued to increase, while their own forces continued to decrease rapidly.

“Damn it...”

“Fire. It seems like fire magic is able to deal additional damage to them.”

They *could*?use fire, but unfortunately, there was a problem with that—whether they were friend or foe, fire would devour them all.

By then, the number of enemy troops had grown to 150,000.

This damned situation required the allied forces to either completely behead their comrades or turn them to ashes. Otherwise, they would just come back to life.

It was literally hell on earth. After just half a day, the number of surviving members of the Allied Army was only 2,000, and they were only thinking of how to escape from their enemies faster. On the other hand, the enemy troops had increased to 180,000.

The person that clicked on the video gulped dryly once again when the video ended.

“How can they kill that...?”

Alexander, the world’s top ranker, stood with Calauhel on the walls of Faelbert Fortress. Calauhel had promised him a huge sum of money to join his side. However, he did not come here because of the money. One wrong move and one of the Six Monster Gods could potentially destroy all of

Athenae. So, Alexander had come here and joined them as a player that was a model for all the other players.

“Calauhel, we don’t have much time. Hurry up and contact Player Minhyuk.”

“...Bullshit.”

Calauhel was a member of Black Stone, an organization that had now become the backbone of the Rothschild Kingdom. Black Stone had run into Minhyuk several times, which was the basis of his hatred for the man.

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“Gaerna will arrive here in half a day. That mongrel is very smart. She is deliberately going all over the place to devour the troops before coming to the final defense line. The number of people that died in her hands has already reached three million. Even her parasitic soldiers have reached 1.2 million already.”

“...”

The people had resorted to calling those that had their brains devoured and controlled by Gaerna as ‘parasitic soldiers.’

“There are quite a few legends of their own continents among that army. They might not be able to use their skills but their power alone is not something that we can afford to deal with just our numbers. And if we don’t stop her now, then...”

Calauhel turned to look at Alexander when he heard those words.

“In half a month, almost half of the territories in Athenae will be devoured by Gaerna. You have to know that the Great Luvien Empire is keeping quiet on purpose. We have to stop her now.”

“All of our preparations are done. We have already purchased a thousand dragon rubies.”

Dragon rubies were named so because they resembled the eyes of a dragon. To be exact, dragon rubies were not gems, but bombs that could blast apart an area fifty meters in radius. It was a very efficient method to deal with Gaerna’s parasitic soldiers, who were vulnerable to fire.

However, dragon rubies were very expensive. They cost around ten platinum each and were very scarce. Even though Calauhel had scoured every place he knew and bought supplies from all over the world, he was only able to gather around a thousand of them.

“Do you really think you can prevent their advance with just that? We have only seen a little bit of Gaerna’s power.”

“...”

It was the truth. They had only seen an extremely small fraction of Gaerna’s power.

There was actually a reason why Alexander wanted Calauhel to call Minhyuk.

“If we fight against Gaerna by ourselves, then we are the only ones who will be at a disadvantage. There are currently a lot of global top rankers in the alliance now. What do you think will happen if I and the others become parasitic soldiers?”

“...”

If that happened, then it would be impossible to stop them.

“Even so...” Calauhel tried to refute Alexander’s words, the veins on his neck popping out at the thought of doing what he asked.

However, before he could finish his sentence, Alexander had already grabbed his collar. “I know that you’re a f*cking bastard that swims in money and feels like he’s on top of the others. Weren’t you the one who declared it? That the Rothsilde Kingdom would be the one that will kill Gaerna? But what’s the situation now? Gaerna is even turning ordinary NPCs into her parasitic soldiers. If you don’t stop her here, then the Rothsilde Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom will be over.”

“What you’re trying to say is...”

“That’s right. Minhyuk must become the Alliance’s King.”

It was a disgrace for him, a stain on his pride, but Alexander still chose to say it.

“Calauhel. The high-rankers here will move only if Minhyuk comes. What do they care about your money? Those high-rankers will definitely make a run for it. Why would they stay here if there was a chance that they would turn into parasitic monsters? They could just run. Nobody wants to become like that. The best way to deal with the enemies is to utilize only a small number of the best of the best.”

He was right. The more allies Gaerna had, the more disadvantageous it would be for them. The best course of action was gathering the best rankers to fight in this war.

“We have to deal with millions of enemies with just a few tens of thousands of allied forces.”

If Minhyuk and the NPCs that he led joined those tens of thousands of allies, then the effect would be tremendous. Calauhel knew that it was unavoidable. If they lost this battle, the Rothsilde Kingdom would collapse within a week.

“...I understand.”

They only had a few hours left before Gaerna arrived at the fortress. Was there any reason for the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to join the hunt for Gaerna? There was none. Even if they tried to frame it as something done for the sake of the players of Athenae, even Calauhel knew it was bullshit.

In fact, the Rothsilde Kingdom had declared that they would be the first to kill Gaerna. So, if the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom came here, they would receive severe criticism.

After receiving Minhyuk’s code, Calauhel sent him a whisper.

The reply came not long after.

Calauhel felt his blood starting to rush to his head the moment he saw the reply. However, he was the one requesting the other party's help. So, he had to think more deeply about his choice of words.

'I have been harassing and bullying Minhyuk since he was still at the intermediate level.'

Therefore, Minhyuk's reaction was only natural.

After a while, he received Minhyuk's reply.

"..."

Calauhel clenched his fists tightly. Once more, he had to remind himself that he was the one that was requesting help.

It seemed like Minhyuk was seriously pondering over the matter this time.

This was business. It was only natural to discuss things like this. Was he supposed to just fight for the sake of the players from all over the world? Of course, it was no surprise that he was looking out for his own self-interest in the process.

He certainly sounded arrogant, but Calauhel was the head of the Rothschilde Family. His wealth and assets were truly immeasurable.

'I think five billion should be more than enough, no?'

The players that had participated in the Battle of the Thrones received around two billion in cash for joining him in this endeavor. It was even under the condition that they could choose to no longer participate in the hunt if they died once. They would just work for a few days as mercenaries, but they would be able to gain that much money. It was practically a windfall.

As for Alexander, he received a little over three billion. It was a huge sum of money. However, in exchange, the Rothschilde Kingdom would gain an astronomical amount of money if they could kill Gaerna. That was why Calauhel did not mind spending that much.

With that range in mind, Calauhel predicted that Minhyuk would ask for five billion at most. Then, Minhyuk's reply arrived.

Chapter 733: God of Birth Gaerna

The Rothschilde Family was well-known for their enormous wealth. Experts had once said, *'The total wealth of the current Rothschilde Family should probably be around five trillion, give or take.'* That was the truth. However, that was the family's money, it did not belong solely to Calauhel.

Of course, it was also true that Calauhel was the one managing that huge amount of money. In a sense, he was the one with the financial power. Right now, Minhyuk was asking for a hundred times the amount that the other rankers had received.

"Two hundred billion...?" Calauhel mumbled, his expression turning ugly.

If Minhyuk had asked for twenty billion, then Calauhel would have thought that he was being serious and giving it a deep consideration. After all, it was a more realistic asking price.

“...!”

That was when Calauhel realized that Minhyuk was truly asking for two hundred billion cash in compensation.

Calauhel was speechless. Minhyuk was speaking sincerely with him but Calauhel did not want to understand. He just shook his head and refused the terms.

Calauhel was still a businessman, his head spinning and working while discussing with Minhyuk. He had judged that Minhyuk was not worth the two hundred billion that he was asking for. Then, Minhyuk countered.

Calauhel looked tense as he terminated the whisper. Alexander, who was by his side, could tell that the negotiations did not go smoothly. Even so, he still did not intervene with the negotiations between Calauhel and Minhyuk. In the first place, it was not something that he could insert himself in.

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“Our 600,000 strong troops will stop Gaerna today,” Calauhel declared.

They began to give orders to the members of the Allied Army stationed on the walls.

“Try to keep the enemies in check while staying inside the walls as much as possible!!!”

“You must never come in contact with the enemies.”

“Players, once your HP falls below 20%, immediately use a Return Order!!!”

“Distribute bottles of oil and matches to the NPCs!”

“...What are we using these bottles of oil and matches for?”

“...?”

The NPC soldiers looked puzzled at the items handed over to them.

Then, the centurion said, “Pour the oil on your body and light yourself up with the match before you die.”

The centurion’s expression was filled with bitterness while the NPC soldiers were stained with fear and terror.

“...This is the only way. Would you rather turn into our enemy and cut your allies down?”

Those words were true. However, the thought of setting themselves on fire started to cause panic among the NPC soldiers.

The 200,000 strong Petro Army had been defeated.

The 150,000 strong troops from Lewatt Kingdom had been defeated.

The Brecht Territory had been swept away, resulting in more than 300,000 casualties.

News of defeat continued to ring in the ears of the NPC soldiers as they were handed a bottle of oil each.

‘May God Athenae’s blessings be with you.’

They would fight for the sake of this land.

“For our descendants that will continue to live here.”

“For my wife and daughter.”

“For my mother.”

“For my lover.”

Every one of them thought about those that were precious to them and chose to continue to fight.

Calauhel, who was watching this scene, felt his heart throb.

‘They are just NPCs.’

Calauhel was someone that did not particularly care about artificial intelligence. However, for some reason, he felt an unknown emotion arise in him as he watched the soldiers’ solemn expression while they prepared for their imminent deaths.

This was the connection and the feelings between a player and an NPC. Perhaps he was feeling this way because Calauhel was the king of the Rothsilde Kingdom, and they were his soldiers, who were going to sacrifice their lives for his kingdom.

Grit—

Calauhel gritted his teeth. “Don’t let them take away what is precious to you! Protect them! We will make history today!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Woaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Loud and passionate cries rang loudly and shook the battlefield. Sadly, the first troops to be deployed were the weakest soldiers. As for the high rankers and the top-ranking NPCs, all of them fell back. This was because they risked accelerating their downfall if these high rankers and outstanding NPCs turned into parasitic soldiers.

Soon, Gaerna and her army appeared right in front of them. The estimated number of their forces was around 1.3 million.

“Click, click, click, click—”

“Kiriririririririiik!”

“Kyakakakaka!”

People that used to be their friends, their lovers, their parents, came charging at them while emitting terrifying insect-like sounds from their mouths. It was like watching a herd of zombies charging at them relentlessly.

There was also Gaerna, who was flapping her butterfly wings above them. “I am... hungryyyyyyy...!”

The entire army turned tense and nervous when they heard her hoarse and creepy voice. All they could do was gulp dryly as they watched Gaerna approach with her army.

[From what I hear, Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi are fully prepared this time.]

[We know that they have a thousand dragon rubies, bombs that can blow away areas of an entire fifty meter radius, with them.]

[That’s not all. Calauhel also bought siege weapons using his enormous wealth and will be using them to fire at the enemies.]

Everyone waited with bated breath, preparing for the moment the enemies came close.

“Ughhhh...”

The soldiers behind the walls shivered in fright when they caught sight of the enemies’ creepy eyes. They looked like they had turned into insects, staring at them from afar while emitting strange cries.

Finally, when the enemies entered within thirty meters from the walls of the fortress, Calauhel took action.

“Fire!!!” He roared as blazing flames shot out from the walls of the fortress.

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

The flames engulfed the parasitic soldiers. However, there were some stronger ones that were able to endure the blazing flames. In response, tens of thousands of mages appeared above the walls in unison and began chanting.

“Explosion.”

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

A loud and powerful explosion bloomed amidst the ranks of the parasitic soldiers. As a thick cloud of dust rose from the ground, the archers moved with practised ease as they took aim and shot the brains of the parasitic soldiers.

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh!

[They are being swept away.]

[In just an instant, 30,000 of the parasitic soldiers had disappeared without leaving any trace.]

[Amazing. As expected of Calauhel and Xu Jiaqi.]

But it was not yet over. Wyverns, carrying knights that held dragon rubies in their hands, soared through the skies.

Flap—

The wyverns descended swiftly as the knights threw the dragon rubies at the spots that they had planned in advance.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Tremendous explosions rocked the battlefield, devouring several areas of a fifty meter radius and causing the parasitic soldiers to disappear into nothingness. Almost 500 dragon rubies exploded and reaped the lives of around 70,000 parasitic soldiers. Of course, the archers made sure to swiftly end the lives of the few that survived, sniping their brains from the walls of the fortress with their arrows.

‘We have a chance at winning.’

The best mana potions were prepared for the mages. Also, even if the vanguard turned into parasitic soldiers, they were the weakest of the bunch and could be easily dealt with.

“More, more, more! Push them back harder!!!”

Crackle—

Perhaps it was because of the ridiculous damage that the dragon rubies unleashed, but the enemies, whose defenses had increased by 30%, were being swept away more easily than they anticipated.

Xu Jiaqi, who was next to Calauhel, shook her head. “There’s something strange...”

“What do you mean?”

“They’re too weak and are getting swept away easily. No matter how vulnerable they are to flames, that’s just...”

“...”

Not long after, the two took notice of Gaerna. No matter what they did, Gaerna was a god.

“It seems like she thought the same as us and has also placed the weakest of her army in the vanguard.”

“...”

Calauhel’s face turned ugly at that. Well, he had already expected it to some extent. However, he felt that Xu Jiaqi should not have voiced that fact. After all, it would definitely affect the morale of the soldiers.

“Gaerna is also hiding the parasitic soldiers composed of high rankers and continental legends at the rear of her army, just like we did with ours.”

It truly was just like what Xu Jiaqi had said.

“She’s currently waiting for our firepower to dwindle. If something else happens in this situation then...”

“Uweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!!!”

At that moment, Gaerna started to vomit once again.

[Parasitic Mosquitoes.]

[Gaerna has vomited parasitic mosquitoes that will give birth to knights. Those that are bitten by the parasitic mosquitoes will turn into parasitic knights after an hour!]

[The parasitic mosquitoes desire the blood of the strong!]

“...?!”

“Uweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!!!”

Tens of thousands of mosquitoes poured out of Gaerna’s mouth each time she threw up.

“Uweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!!!”

Everyone could not help but freeze at the sight of countless mosquitoes filling the sky above them.

“Uweeeeeeeck! Hack, ack!!!”

Finally, around 1.5 million red mosquitoes the size of a grain of rice began to fill the sky. Then, they began to fly in search of their prey.

“Shoot, shoot them!!! Mages, shoot that mosquito swarm right now!!!”

“Insecticide!!! Spray the insecticide that we have prepared!!!”

Knowing that they would deal with bugs, they had already prepared some insecticide. Large containers filled to the brim with insecticides shot to the skies.

Poof, poof, poof, poof, poof—

Thousands of mosquitoes died as the insecticides exploded. The mages also sent a wave of fire magic, lighting up the insecticide and creating a path of flames in the sky. However, there were just far too many of them. The insecticide would either get swept away by the wind or the mosquitoes would scatter around to avoid the attacks.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

[Gaerna’s Shriek.]

[The parasitic mosquitoes respond to Gaerna’s shriek. Their movement speed has tripled.]

[They quickly move to chase the strong!]

“...”

Calauhel’s face turned even uglier as he hurriedly cried out his orders. “Rankers! Quick, log out...!”

Thwack—

Unfortunately, before he could even finish his words, Alexander felt a sting on his neck, his palms automatically reaching out and slapping the area. When he looked down at his palms, he could see blood.

“What the hell is this...?”

Then, the veins in his body swelled and popped out, turning green to the naked eye.

[You have been infected by the parasitic mosquito.]

[If you can’t detoxify the infection with an excellent antidote, you will become a parasitic soldier in an hour.]

[Your HP is rapidly declining.]

[Heat has started to flow through your veins.]

Alexander’s eyes grew wide as a foreign and strange feeling engulfed his entire body.

“Haa... Haa...” Alexander sat down, gasping. When he looked around, he could see that the best players and the strongest NPCs in Faelbert Fortress’ walls were exhibiting the same symptoms as him.

“Antidote...”

Gulp, gulp, gulp—

People from all over the walls had started to gulp down antidotes. However, a set of notifications rang in their ears, bringing them further despair.

[You can’t detoxify the infection with a high-grade antidote!]

[You have to use top-grade antidotes!]

To make matters worse, the parasitic mosquitoes were insidious. They would hide and bite those that had taken the top-grade antidotes once again.

“...”

Top-grade antidotes were very hard to come by because their ingredients were rare. Besides, they would rarely carry something that precious, since it was unlikely for them to get infected by such a high-level poison.

At that moment, Alexander realized what was going to happen next. “Everyone here would become parasitic soldiers...?”

This was the epitome of a disaster.

Joy Co. Ltd.’s meeting room.

The expression of everyone in the room was stained with despair.

President Kang Taehoon sighed. “In an hour, they will start to attack their allies.”

“This will be the end of Faelbert Fortress.”

“The people gathered in Faelbert Fortress consist of global top rankers and outstanding NPCs. Unless their entire body is completely resistant to poison, they will be a threat not only to Faelbert Fortress, but also to the entire world.”

“We can expect the situation to calm down only after the Luvien Empire makes a move.”

“If that happens, the entire Athenae will be under the control of the Luvien Empire.”

Everyone sighed. Kang Taehoon closed his eyes, sinking deep into his thoughts.

‘What should we do to get out of this difficult situation?’

They also had to do something about those high rankers. If they became parasitic soldiers, then everything would be over.

Clack—

“Haa... Haaa...”

Then, at that moment, someone slammed the door open. It was none other than Employee Lee Minhwa.

Team Leader Park, who was sitting with the others inside the meeting room, looked at her in confusion. “What’s the matter?”

Ordinary employees could not recklessly barge into a meeting. However, Team Leader Park could tell that something was up when he saw Lee Minhwa’s expression.

“Player... Player Minhyuk has finished cooking.”

“Cooking?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You’re talking about cooking?”

Everyone was bewildered with her declaration. That was when something flashed in Park Minggyu’s head, making him jump to his feet.

“Don’t tell me...”

Lee Minhwa nodded as Team Leader Park hurriedly switched the video on the TV screen. There, they saw Player Minhyuk cooking with Brod by his side.

“President,” Team Leader Park called out to Kang Taehoon. He looked like he had managed to grasp onto a strand of hope.

“Hmm?”

Everyone turned to look at Minggyu, who looked back at them and said, “Souls can’t become parasitic soldiers, right?”

Chapter 734: God of Birth Gaerna

The entire world held their breaths as they watched the battle in Faelbert Fortress unfold. The Allied Army used dragon rubies, various fire magics, and explosives. However, with the appearance of the strong parasitic soldiers that stayed at the rear of Gaerna’s army, their flames and explosions began to lose their effects on the enemies.

Baaaaaang—

The parasitic soldier, with his entire body scorched all over after receiving the brunt of the bomb’s explosion, continued to push through. He clinged on the walls and began to climb up slowly.

The archers tried to shoot the heads of the parasitic soldiers that clung to the walls, but they would either block the arrows or duck from the trajectory. The worst was when the arrows that they shot could not even penetrate their skulls.

“Haaack, aack!” Gaerna coughed loudly. This time, tens of thousands of wasps flew out of her mouth.

The wasps grew larger and larger as they flew forward, eventually becoming as large, perhaps even larger, than the wyverns in the sky. They would even shoot venomous stingers from time to time.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Keuaaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Ughhhhhhh...”

Gaerna did not let the opportunity go. Seeing that her enemies were dying one after another, she immediately vomited thousands of larvae. The larvae quickly gnawed at their brains, creating a fresh wave of parasitic soldiers.

“This, this...”

Calauhel started to ponder after hearing the notification that rang for everyone all over the world.

[The newly born Gaerna had even eaten her nanny.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Goosebumps rose on the skin of all of the people listening to the notifications. This message was something that Joy Co. Ltd. had prepared before.

[Athenae, seeing Gaerna's viciousness and ferocity, locked her up and placed her under surveillance.]

Despite the message ringing in their ears, the NPCs continued to fight desperately.

Staaaaaab—

Recca, a soldier that had his chest pierced by one of the wasps' stingers, was a young man that dreamt of becoming a knight one day.

[You have been attacked by a wasp.]

[Your HP is rapidly declining.]

[Your head is spinning, you cannot come back to your senses.]

These would probably be the notifications that Recca would have heard if he were a player. Just like that, his head started to spin and his entire body was flushed with heat, making his breath turn ragged.

Spurt—

The soldier named Recca pulled out the stinger that was stuck in his chest and slowly opened his eyes to take one last look in the world that he lived in. Then, he poured the contents of the bottle of oil on his body. He then lit a match with trembling hands and steeled his heart.

Crackle—

The hero lit himself on fire and hugged one of the parasitic soldiers as the fire began to devour his body. It was not just Recca, plenty of soldiers poured oil on their bodies and lit themselves on fire when they knew that their situation was hopeless, their bodies illuminating the battlefield and creating a devastating scene of defeat, which was heartbreakingly beautiful at the same time.

“...”

Twitch—

Calauhel felt his heart throb at the scene. He was the one that had said that they were nothing but mere artificial intelligence. But the expressions on their faces and the look in their eyes as they died were telling him a different story.

‘Please win.’

‘Please kill Gaerna.’

‘You are our king.’

Why did Calauhel start playing Athenae? It was a way for the head of the Rothschilde Family to ease his boredom. Having that feeling of obtaining everything and losing nothing had made him turn to Athena, hoping to find something new and interesting.

The NPCs in this world did not know who Calauhel was. They did not revere him because he was a noble person from the Rothschilde Family. When he first logged inside the game, the beginner's instructor had told him this, *'Don't lose spirit!'*

From that point on, he started to play Athenae. His journey was fun and fulfilling and he even founded a kingdom in this place.

"Long live His Majesty Calauheeeeeeeeeee!!!"

Crackleeeeeee—

"Rothschilde Kingdom forever!!!"

Crackleeeeeee—

But now, his people were turning into beautiful flames one after another.

[On the day that Gaerna was locked up in her room, she ate everyone around her and promptly disappeared.]

Calauhel's eyes turned bloodshot. The number of their allied troops were constantly decreasing while the number of their enemies continued to increase.

.

[One day, she suddenly appeared with 200,000 troops.]

Calauhel began to run.

"Uwooooooooooooooh!"

Armed with all kinds of artifacts, skills and items that were far greater than anybody else, he charged at the parasitic soldiers that were attempting to devour his own soldiers, killing them one after another.

[But her army grew and became 400,000.]

Slaaaaaaash—

"Get back to your senses! Don't die!!! I will fight by your side!!!"

Calauhel's cries brought strength to his soldiers.

[Then, it became 700,000.]

Calauhel helped up one of the soldiers that had stumbled on his feet. "Stand up, quick!!!"

[The army continued to grow and became a million.]

"Your Majesty."

The soldier looked at the bottle of oil with fear in his eyes. Calauhel shook his head. This was the order that he had given himself, die by their own hands or become a parasitic soldier.

The soldier began to pour the contents of the bottle of oil on his head but Calauhel grabbed his hand. “Stop! Don’t light yourself up in flames!!!”

Only now did he realize how cruel and heartless that order was.

“Aren’t you supposed to come back? To your home? To your family...?”

Staaaaaab—

The wasp’s stinger and venom pierced through the chest of the young soldier that Calauhel was supporting.

Swoosh—

Calauhel’s face turned ugly as he watched the soldier fall down. He quickly took out a fan and waved it towards the wasps in the sky, the wind generated by his fan shredding them to pieces. However, it was already too late.

[Her army became two million.]

Despair stained Calauhel’s expression as he watched the people around him turn into parasitic soldiers.

[Then, it became three million.]

The constant ringing of the message in his ears brought him further and deeper into despair.

Thwack—

Feeling something on his neck, he quickly slapped it with his palm. Then, he saw green blood dripping down his palms.

[You have been infected by the parasitic mosquito.]

[If you can’t detoxify the infection with an excellent antidote, you will become a parasitic soldier in an hour.]

[Your HP is rapidly declining.]

[Heat has started to flow through your veins.]

Calauhel’s vision began to spin.

[Gaerna’s army pressured and pushed back the Gods and the Divine Army. The Gods, before they could truly die, chose to kill themselves.]

[This part of history was soaked in blood and continued on for a long time.]

[According to a record left behind by one of the gods, Gaerna’s army had exceeded 4.4 million.]

Then, Gaerna began to move, the arm beneath her wings swinging fiercely.

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang, clang—

Mantis’ arms popped out from the ground and slaughtered thousands of soldiers.

“I’m hungryyyyyyyyyy!!!” Gaerna cried, soaring to the skies and flying straight towards Faelbert Fortress.

“We have... to stop her,” Calauhel mumbled, his face flushed red from the heat of his body.

But then, tens of thousands of tentacles sprouted all over Gaerna’s body. The tentacles shot forward and pierced through the heads of both players and soldiers. The soldiers immediately turned into their enemies, their swords pointed at the people that were once their allies.

[God once said, ‘Gaerna is despair.’]

The allied forces had to face the onslaught of those who had once been their comrades.

“A, aaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Click, click, click, click, click!”

“Save meeeeeeeee!!!”

“Your Majesty Calauhel, please get to safety!!!”

[A disaster.]

The soldiers around Calauhel surrounded him and created layers trying to protect him somehow.

“Calauheeeeeeeeeeeel!!!” Xu Jiaqi’s urgent voice rang in his ears but Calauhel was being swallowed by his panic.

[A devil.]

Calauhel felt like everything around him was happening in slow-motion. The constant ring of the messages in his ears pressed him deeper into the quagmire of panic, his breathing turning more ragged by the second.

‘*Damn it.*’

The mosquito’s bite made him more unstable as time went by. He felt fear. He realized that the Rothschild Kingdom would fall and he would lose many people.

Once again, tens of thousands of tentacles sprouted from Gaerna’s body and mouth, with dozens of them flying towards Calauhel.

[A predator.]

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang—

At that moment, accurate and concise swordsmanship cleaved the tentacles that were aiming for Calauhel’s head. At the same time, a palm shot forward and slapped Calauhel’s cheek.

Thwaaaaaaack—!

“Get back to your senses, Calauhel!”

His vision returned to him and he finally saw his surroundings once again, the slap awakening him.

The one that slapped Calauhel was none other than Alexander. Around him stood plenty of players that once participated as kings of their country in the Battle of the Thrones. Even the 20,000 elite rankers and NPCs that they sent to the rear had appeared together with them.

Alexander dragged Calauhel up and said, “Change of plans.”

There was a somber and grim look in Alexander’s eyes as he continued, “We take down as many of them as we can before we die!!!”

Fwooooooooooosh—

The single arrow shot by Master Archer Miao turned into thousands of arrows and accurately struck the heads of the enemies.

“Sword of Disaster.”

Alexander leapt to the skies and struck Gaerna with his sword.

Slaaaaaaaaaaash—

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!!!”

Alex, the global number one mage, sent an explosion that hit the screaming Gaerna.

Baaaaaaaaaang—

Seeing Gaerna fly back, the 20,000-strong elite troops began to push back and drive away the enemies that clung to the walls of Faelbert Fortress. These outstanding members of their troops poured out all of their power to drive the enemies away.

“Meteor.”

Rumbleeeeeeeee—

Alex summoned a meteor that slammed into the ground and massacred nearly ten thousand enemies. Alexander flew above them and reaped their heads one after another. Master Archer Miao shot three arrows per second, accurately piercing through the heads of the enemies.

[Amazing.]

[Only five minutes have passed since the 20,000 elite troops joined the battle but almost 60,000 enemies have already disappeared without leaving a single trace.]

[This battle clearly shows the potential of the world’s top rankers and NPCs.]

[It seems like they are giving it their all before they die.]

[...I’m cheering them on. As the strongest and supreme existences in Athenae, it seems like they plan to reduce Gaerna’s army as much as possible.]

The rankers turned the tables in an instant. The alliance, which was on the defensive since earlier, had started to push back.

“At the very least, we’ll take half of you to hell with us,” Alexander declared.

His words sounded as if it was something that they could truly achieve. However, the messages were not yet over.

[To hunt the predator, the gods had to face 4.4 million strong troops with just 500,000 of their finest men.]

[They finally saw the light of victory.]

[However...]

Bang—!

“...?”

Alexander and Calauhel turned to look at the direction of the sound, their faces filled with doubt and confusion. A loud explosion devoured the area right next to them. That area was the place where Mage Alex was. It seemed that Alex had been infected with the parasitic mosquito too.

Baaaaaang—

Boooooooooom—

Baaaaaaaaaam—

Baaaaaaang—

At that moment, explosions appeared all over the place and began to devour their allies. They were popping. The heads of those that the parasitic mosquitoes infected began to pop and explode, devouring the area around them.

‘The close-combat class members of the army did not explode.’

Just like mentioned before, Gaerna’s army could not use skills or magic. In other words, Gaerna was controlling them and making them explode one after another. In just an instant, 10,000 of the rankers stationed on the walls of the fortress died.

Riiiiiiiiiiiiing—

A sharp ringing sound rang in Calauhel’s ears amidst the countless explosions that bloomed all over the place. Although he was trying his hardest to come back to his senses, his vision had turned white. Then, the notifications rang in his ears.

[The Alliance’s King has not been chosen yet.]

[Players, please choose the Alliance’s King.]

[The voting for the Alliance’s King will end in three minutes.]

“...”

Calauhel recalled the conversation that he had with Alexander.

‘I will become the Alliance’s King. I am very confident about that.’

This was what Calauhel declared. However, with his still ringing ears, Calauhel sent a whisper to someone.

“Your terms... win... or fail... I accept...!!!”

Alexander was left in despair as he watched Calauhel become like this. He also sent a whisper.

He did not receive any answer. To be honest, Alexander was a bit disappointed. After all, many of the top rankers were fighting here for the future of Athenae. Of course, joining this war was dependent on the individual's choice. Whether the deal with Calauhel went through, it would be his choice whether he would come here or not. Still, Alexander could not help but feel animosity towards him for that.

“...?!”

Alexander's eyes grew wide. Those words only meant one thing. *‘He had been preparing something?’*

Then, Calauhel cried out, his voice stained with tears, “I am voting for Minhyuk as the Alliance's King!!!”

[Rothschild Kingdom's King Calauhel votes for Minhyuk.]

All of the players, whose heads were about to burst, turned to look at him. Quickly, they followed suit before they faced their deaths.

“I vote for Minhyuk to be the king!!!”

“I am voting for Minhyuk as the king.”

“I vote for Minhyuk!”

“...Minhyuk!”

They voted for the Alliance's king, their voices echoing all over the battlefield.

Alexander could only laugh helplessly as countless strong players were devoured by explosions and disappeared without a trace. Of the 600,000 strong troops, around 200,000 of them had died, while 150,000 turned into their enemies. Despite this situation, Alexander murmured, “I vote for Minhyuk as the Alliance's King.”

Shiiiiiiiiing—

He knew that his end was near. In fifteen minutes, the infection would spread all over his body and turn him into a parasitic soldier that would slaughter plenty of his allies.

The number of surviving elite rankers and NPCs was only around 10,000. Each and every single one of them were sporting grim looks on their faces as they watched Gaerna shriek and stop them from moving.

Disaster Specialist Ricor from the Maseratti Kingdom was among their ranks. He looked coldly at Gaerna, who was trying to stop them from killing themselves, and mumbled coldly, “Eat shit.”

Flaaaaaaash—

Blink—

The moment Ricor triggered the ‘Disaster of Light’, a bright light appeared from the sky and attracted everyone's attention as a loud ringing rang in their ears.

Riiiiiiiiiiiiing—

Riiiiiiiiiiiiing—

The rankers, who were all preparing to log out and shut themselves away from this battlefield, stopped in their tracks the moment the notifications rang over the ringing in their ears.

[The selection for the Alliance's King is over!]

[Minhyuk has been chosen to become the Alliance's King!]

[The Alliance's King stats and skills will receive special effects!]

[The Alliance's King is not in Faelbert Fortress and is located someplace else!]

Then, another set of notifications rang in their ears.

Ring!

[The Alliance's King has arrived at Faelbert Fortress!]

[The Alliance's King's appearance has a special effect on everyone present! All of your stats will increase by 7%!]

When the light disappeared, a man with a cape carrying the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together fluttering behind him stood on top of the walls of Faelbert Fortress.

Flash—!

Light flashed once again turning everything white before returning to their original state.

Flash—!

Everyone was looking at Minhyuk. Feeling their gazes, Minhyuk turned to look down at the Allied Army.

Flash—!

All of their gazes followed Minhyuk's fingers as he raised his arm to the sky.

Flash—!

Finally, he snapped his thumb and index finger.

Snap—!

“Everyone's Happiness.”

At the same time, ten thousand dishes appeared in the sky and slowly fell down until they floated in front of the top rankers and NPCs.

A message rang following the appearance of the dishes. This time, it was not Gaerna's message but a message that Minhyuk sent.

[The ten thousand strong knights that fight to protect Athenae will cut down Gaerna's one million strong army.]

Chapter 735: God of Birth Gaerna

Back when Minhyuk was still negotiating with Calauhel.

Minhyuk stared at Calauhel cursing him as he ended the whisper.

‘It’s a fair price.’

He had judged that asking for 250 billion was not that excessive. After all, he had also witnessed the complete massacre of the 500,000-strong troops that marched first in the hands of Gaerna.

Minhyuk was also aware that the Allied Army was trying to turn the tables with just a handful of elites. He was certain that they would not be able to put up a good fight at all, especially with Gaerna’s army’s overwhelming numbers.

What did 250 billion represent? It was a lot. Of course, the reason why he asked for so much was that he felt quite repugnant and disgusted with Calauhel’s request. Both the Rothschild Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom had declared that they would kill Gaerna to the world and targeted the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. However, the moment they were pushed to a corner, they came running to him and sent him a whisper.

However, that was not the decisive reason why he asked for so much.

‘Can we even measure the true value of this box?’

The Battle God had given Minhyuk his blessings. Among the blessings that he received was an item called the ‘Battle God’s Treasure Box.’ What was the Battle God’s Treasure Box?

[The Battle God’s Treasure Box will give you the ingredients, artifacts, orders, potions or whatever it is that you desire. However, you can only get one item and its rank would randomly be chosen from legendary~god!]

As it turned out, the box would give someone whatever they wanted once. However, the rank or grade of the item would depend on luck. If they were lucky, they would be able to get a god-grade item and if their luck was bad, then they would get a legendary-grade item.

Minhyuk would choose to get a god-grade ingredient, cook it into a dish, and use it to increase his powers. However, his plans had now changed.

“Select an ingredient that has an effect that would allow the complete removal of all poisons and abnormal status from the Battle God’s Treasure Box.”

[The Battle God’s Treasure Box is searching for the ingredient that you want.]

Ring!

[You have acquired the Bean Sprouts Grown by the God of Poisons.]

Minhyuk immediately checked the ingredient that he acquired.

‘You will have the power to resist all kinds of poisons and abnormal status.’

This was the most important point. Since it was a god-grade ingredient, Minhyuk could expect additional effects like a tremendous increase in stats or skills. Of course, this was all under the assumption that he would be able to serve a high-grade dish.

Minhyuk immediately started cooking.

Bean sprouts were ingredients used in various dishes. It could be used in stir-fries, fried rice, rice noodles, and many others. Simply put, bean sprouts could be used in a variety of ways. The dish

that Minhyuk chose to make was ‘Vietnamese Rice Noodles’, well known for its refreshing and delicious soup.

‘It’s easy and quick to eat.’

Minhyuk had recently received the privilege where he could raise one of his skills to MAX, which allowed his Everyone’s Happiness to reach Level 9. Although it could only be used once, it could still allow him to feed 10,000 people all at one go, during that one time.

Then, he started cooking.

‘I just did not respond to Calauhel’s offer.’

That was right. Minhyuk just chose to not respond to Calauhel’s offer. However, that did not mean that he would not help. He also wanted to protect Athenae. After all, he was very grateful to the game Athenae for giving him a second chance at life. If it had not been for Athenae, his condition would not have improved.

As he cooked with all his might, he remembered the words that Brod told him before.

—Your Majesty, I’m sorry but I would like to visit the place that we lived at in the past with them.

In the Land of the Gods, there was a collapsed empire. It was the place where Brod, his Red Knights and his soldiers once lived. Right now, that was where he wanted to go with the souls of his men. Brod assured him that it would not take that long.

Meanwhile, the reports from Genie kept on ringing in Minhyuk’s ears.

Despite the constant influx of reports in his ears, Minhyuk did not lose his concentration. To protect Athenae, which was dear and precious to him, and for the people fighting there he had to concentrate.

Finally, he finished cooking.

Ring!

[You have completed Vietnamese Rice Noodles.]

The entire world was in despair as they watched the best rankers use their final strength and kill off as many as they could before they got fully infected.

“Even if I go down, I will kill one more of you bastards!!!”

“I shudder at the thought of you bastards surviving and infecting others.”

“Die!!! Die!!!”

They would soon receive the penalty for being forced to log out. For top ranking players like them, being forced to log out would mean that they would lose a lot, more than what an ordinary player would lose. Some of them might even be pushed out of their position in an instant. That was just how huge the penalty was. However, despite that, the top ranking players still chose to fight until the bitter end.

Then, a message rang in the ears of all of the people drowning in despair all over the world.

[The head of the members of the Divine Army that the gods had sent exploded and swept away their allies.]

[Only 50,000 of them survived. Those 50,000 strong troops fought until the very end to protect the Land of the Gods.]

[However, they too became the enemies and started to point their weapons at the gods.]

[In front of Gaerna's actions...]

The messages were filled with despair. But amidst these messages, a series of notifications popped out.

[The Alliance's King has arrived at Faelbert Fortress!]

[The Alliance's King's appearance has a special effect on everyone present! All of your stats will increase by 7%!]

The moment he snapped his fingers, the same dish appeared in front of all 10,000 top rankers and NPCs, accompanied by a flash of light. The dish was none other than Vietnam Rice Noodles.

Meanwhile, Gaerna's message continued to ring in their ears.

[For days on end, the gods tried to hunt Gaerna...]

[However, Gaerna's army just continued to increase...]

[In the end, the Absolute Gods...]

A voice rang loudly over the message that brought despair upon the people of the world.

[The ten thousand strong knights that fight to protect Athenae will cut down Gaerna's one million strong army.]

Everyone cheered. Hope bloomed in the faces of the people that had stopped in their tracks to watch the battle on the electronic displays on the streets. A guy watching the scene in the subway on his mobile phone could not help the goosebumps that rose on his skin. Even those that were watching the real-time video in the company together could not help but shout, ‘Woah—!’

‘Ten thousand knights will defeat Gaerna's one million troops.’

The thrill and excitement brought forth by this declaration spread all over Joy Co. Ltd.

“It's, It's Minhyuk!!!”

“Minhyuk came!”

Everyone cheered when they saw Minhyuk appear along with 10,000 dishes.

Meanwhile, President Kang Taehoon stared at Minhyuk on the monitor and thought, *'Please.'*

Gaerna was the most difficult being to deal with among the Six Monster Gods. The only one that could stop her now was none other than Minhyuk. However, there were people that thought that those words were nothing but an empty promise. Having seen what they saw, It was just impossible.

Gaerna's messages were still ringing.

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that Ruled and Commanded all of the Armies, took out his sword.]

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that Liked to Cook, cooked for them.]

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that Never Knew How to Back Down, gave them the will to stand up and never collapse.]

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that Ruled the Dead, sent those that could never be infected to defeat the enemy.]

According to the notifications, even the Absolute Gods suffered in the hands of Gaerna. Would the appearance of a single player change the flow of the game just like that?

Gaerna realized something after getting a whiff of the scent of food and immediately moved to try and restrain the rankers and NPCs that were trying to eat. She could truly do so. After all, she had the power to make their heads explode at any given moment.

But then, God's Voice rang once again.

[Don't be afraid.]

The majestic and imposing voice struck the hearts of all of the viewers.

[A girl, who has the power to rule the world, will lend her strength for our sake.]

Flaaaaaash—

At that moment, a beautiful girl appeared next to Minhyuk. She was the God of Snakes Elizabeth. Light appeared on the tips of Elizabeth's fingers. The light then shot out and devoured Gaerna.

[Gaerna will temporarily be unable to control the brains of the infected!]

[Gaerna will temporarily be unable to infect others!]

At the same time, Gaerna's army charged forward with a shriek, trying to stop the top rankers and NPCs from eating the dish in front of them.

[The greatest and mightiest Spear God will stop the enemies for our sake.]

Flaaaaaaaash—

An old man with long black hair fluttering behind him fell from the sky, his white spear glittering beautifully under the light of the sun.

“Absolute Pinnacle Spear.”

A downpour of spears rained upon the ground and instantly turned 40,000 of Gaerna's army that were charging toward the rankers into ashes. It was quickly followed up by another notification.

[The Evil God, who dyed the world with blood and fear, will lend his power for our sake.]

Flaaaaaaash—

The Puzzling Seasoning Jar came out of Minhyuk's inventory and revealed a handsome man who was glaring coldly through the gaps of his long hair.

“Get lost.”

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

Tens of thousands of books floated around him and released bolts of black lightning that devoured and slaughtered Gaerna's Army.

“I'm hungryyyyyyyyyyyy!!!” Gaerna screamed as she flew to the sky.

“Uweeeeeeeeeeeck!!!”

Then, tens of thousands of mosquitoes flew out of her mouth. The swarm of mosquitoes flew and grew until they were the size of an average human being.

[Mosquito Knight. Level 531.]

Everyone fell deeper into despair when they saw the mosquito knights. At that time, Minhyuk, who was standing atop the walls of Faelbert Fortress, leapt to the skies.

Then, blazing black flames flared up and shot out from the blade of his sword as he swung them toward the mosquito knights that had started to gather in the sky. Fortunately, the skill: Double Skill with a 1.2% probability of getting triggered, was activated. The skill allowed him to double the effects and the radius of his strike.

[And I will also...]

The entire world, including the rankers that were hurriedly eating the Vietnamese Rice Noodles, watched Minhyuk. One could see the hope in their eyes.

Someone gulped loudly, their hands sweating profusely as they watched Food God Minhyuk unleash a blazing flame from his sword. Then, the blazing black flames turned into a wave that cleared an entire path in the sky that had darkened from the appearance of the swarm of mosquitoes.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Crackleeeeeeeee—!

The Overlord's Technique devoured and annihilated all of the mosquitoes that appeared in the sky. The flames continued to spread until it reached and set Gaerna ablaze.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck! I'm going to kill you! Die! Dieeeeeeeeeee!”

[...fight with you. And not only that.]

At that moment, Gaerna burst out into flames.

“Kihyaaaaaaaaaack!”

[Gaerna's Wrath.]

[Gaerna's Wrath has awakened all of the insects.]

Gaerna was not only the God of Birth but also the God of Bugs. Just like that, various kinds of unknown and mysterious bugs soared to the sky and covered it in a sea of black. Just like before, those bugs grew the size of humans too. There were at least 60,000 of them flying in the sky and many more in the ground.

"I'm going to kill you!!!" Gaerna roared as the swarm of insects charged at Minhyuk.

Despite the nervous tension that surrounded everyone else, Minhyuk remained calm and composed. All of them believed that no matter how powerful Food God Minhyuk was, there was no way for him to kill almost 200,000 insects in one go.

However, the notifications were not over yet.

[Your idol.]

Thump—

Someone stepped forward and stood right next to Minhyuk. His skin, which was covered with bulging green veins earlier, had now returned to normal. Rather than that, there was this black and imposing aura that surrounded the man's body. He was Alexander.

[Your friend.]

Thump—

This time, a woman with attractive and alluring brown skin, and a beautiful bow hanging on her back appeared next to him. This woman was none other than Master Archer Miao.

[Your rulers and kings.]

"Alliance's King, give us your orders!!!"

"Food God, give us your orders!!!"

"Uwooooooooooooooh!!!"

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!"

Almost 10,000 people with black aura oozing out of their bodies gathered around Minhyuk amidst the sea of bugs.

'Ellie's Swordsmanship.'

Minhyuk glared sharply at the incoming sea of bugs while his body released an imposing red aura.

[We will all make history by defeating a million troops with just ten thousand strong men.]

With his sharp and cold gaze, Minhyuk ordered, "Destroy them."

Chapter 736: God of Birth Gaerna

[You have eaten Vietnamese Rice Noodles.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[Your HP and MP have recovered by 50%.]

[All of your stats have increased by 17%.]

[Your skills' cooldown has decreased by 20%.]

[Your Disaster Swordsmanship's skill level has increased by +1.]

[You will be able to resist all kinds of poison and abnormal status.]

[The buff will last for four days.]

Everyone that ate the Vietnamese rice noodles that Minhyuk made were shocked.

'This is a legendary grade dish...?'

'The effects of a legendary grade dish are this great?'

'This is crazy. Then, what will be the effects of a god-grade dish?'

To be exact, Minhyuk's case was slightly special. Even though the grade of his dishes was not necessarily high, it would still be able to display greater effects and better power than similar grade dishes cooked by others. This was all thanks to the effects of 'Food God's Cooking Skills' and 'Extreme Trance'. In fact, although the dish that Minhyuk made did not reach god-grade, the ingredients were excellent. Hence, the effects were like that.

The 10,000 strong rankers stood around Minhyuk, who was the sole person that was releasing a red aura.

[The poison from the Parasitic Mosquitoes that infected and spread all over your body has disappeared.]

With the 17% increase in all of their stats, all of them could be said to be in their best condition. For global top rankers and NPCs at their level, that much of an increase meant that the power that they could display would be beyond words. That was not all. Even their skills, which could no longer level up, had increased in level.

'This is the Food God's power...'

'Amazing.'

However, there was something that they had to do first before delving deeper into their admiration.

[The world's best rankers and NPCs have gathered around the Alliance's King, the Food God.]

[There are more than 50,000 Mosquito Knights flying at them with spears in hand.]

The Mosquito Knights all had wings and were bipedal creatures that were holding spears in their hands.

God of Archery Miao, who watched these mosquitoes charge toward Minhyuk, announced her attack, which would create a new legend.

"Tempest Shot."

Vwoooooooooooooooooong—

With her strengthened and reinforced Tempest Shot, the attack flew and devoured an area of forty meter radius.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—!

The loud and violent sound of the air whipping around rang loudly as her arrow swept through most of the mosquito knights that were almost reaching Minhyuk. Immediately after that, Spear God Ben, with his fluttering black hair, sent his spear and stabbed the mosquitoes as hard as he could.

“Exploding Spear.”

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

A huge explosion occurred and forced the mosquitoes to fall out of the sky. Immediately after that, Alexander’s sword sprang from the ground and grew until it was forty meters in length, slaughtering all of the beings that it sliced through in one go.

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

The 10,000 best rankers and NPCs of the world unleashed all their skills without restraint, and slaughtered the mosquito knights. In just an instant, they were able to annihilate more than 60,000 mosquito knights.

[What amazing firepower, no?]

[No one among the 10,000 strengthened rankers received any damage even though they slaughtered more than 50,000 mosquito knights.]

[However, it’s still too early for us to be happy. Gaerna is still in a much better shape than we can hope for.]

Minhyuk immediately used the chat function of the ‘Alliance’s King.’

Their enemies were over 600,000 in numbers. On the contrary, the Allied Army only had a little over 100,000 people left. Yet, he was asking them to retreat. However, Minhyuk had a good reason for doing so. This was because it would be very difficult for the 10,000 strong men to fight back if these people became parasitic soldiers too.

‘Take down and hunt a large number of enemies with the least number of allies.’ This was Minhyuk’s plan.

The 10,000 of the strongest rankers jumped in the middle of the ranks of the parasitic soldiers. Of course, Minhyuk also joined the battle. They displayed a shocking sight as they fought. The parasitic soldiers, which hundreds of thousands of soldiers had a hard time dealing with, were being swept away so easily.

Since the parasitic soldiers could not use any skills or magic, it was much easier for the rankers and NPCs that had grown much stronger, to deal with them. After all, they could use their skills, magic and artifacts properly.

Everything happened in an instant. The 10,000 cut down 50,000. Then, they cut down 100,000. But the impressive fact was that there were only less than fifty people that died.

[The people that we are watching right now are the world's best and supreme existences.]

[There's no way that the parasitic soldiers will be able to deal with them so easily, especially if they are pushing hard like this.]

[They're even advancing and retreating appropriately to make sure that they don't get exhausted quickly.]

[Amazing. It makes me want to fight alongside them.]

All of the viewers were in admiration. The best and strongest combatants, even though they numbered only 10,000, were not being pushed back by the hundreds of thousands of parasitic soldiers that surrounded them!

But then, Gaerna tilted her dragonfly's head and looked at them intently.

"Kihyeeeeeck?" Gaerna cried strangely, tilting her head to the left and to the right repeatedly.

"Kihyeeeeeeck!"

Not long after, she clicked her disgusting mandibles.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom!

The parasitic soldiers that surrounded the strongest fighters began to explode one after another. They even jumped at the top rankers and NPCs before exploding.

"Keuaaaaaack!"

"Aaaaaaack!"

"Ugh!"

It seemed like Gaerna's message was not yet over.

[Gaerna's army exploded all at once, inflicting serious and heavy damages to the army sent by the Absolute Gods.]

[In just an instant, more than 200,000 Divine Army troops had died.]

This was obviously a power that allowed her to kill plenty of her enemies. Even so, Gaerna was hard to deal with because she had a lot of troops.

[The Absolute Gods had lost plenty of their troops but they believed that they could win.]

[Why? Because they had significantly decreased the number of their enemies.]

[However, with a whisper of 'I'm hungry' ...]

"I'm hungry."

Giggle—

Gaerna's dragonfly eyes were smiling as she eyed the rankers that were being swept away by the explosions.

"Uweeeeeeeck!"

Then, tentacles stretched out of her mouth and latched onto the bodies that had not yet completely disappeared.

Twitch, twitch—

The tentacles wriggled and twitched strangely, devouring the bodies and letting them flow into her body.

[Then, she said, 'Delicious'.]

"Delicious."

At that moment, Gaerna's entire body began to swell and deflate repeatedly.

Twitch, twitch—!

Just like that, her entire body was reborn. Gaerna's already strange body grew hard and tough, her eyes that resembled that of a dragonfly turning into that of a mantis.

Indeed, she was changing into a mantis. Even the wings on her back had started to change and turn into that of a cockroach's wings. Her build also changed, turning into a 180 centimeter tall being with a very bulky figure. Her arms also turned as sharp as a blade.

"Hiyayayayaaaaaaah!" Gaerna breathed through her nose and released a very satisfied and refreshed breath.

[Gaerna has transformed into her complete form!]

[Gaerna will continue to devour those that she had killed!]

Everyone looked at her with bated breath. In fact, everyone had assumed that Gaerna only had one excellent ability and that was controlling her army. There were some that looked at her as if they could not believe what just happened.

"Kekekekekekekekeke!" Gaerna laughed maniacally as she looked at them through her mantis-like eyes. Then, she said, "Did you know?"

"..."

"You don't? You don't know how scrumptious you look right now?" Gaerna said, her voice hoarse and gritty.

All of the people present gulped dryly as they watched her lick her lips with her forked green tongue.

"I will enjoy this meal. Kekekekekekekekeke!"

Gaerna's gruesome laugh echoed across the entire area, making everyone nervous. There was nothing that prohibited Gaerna from absorbing the powers if she had already absorbed once before. In other words, she could become stronger.

“Everyone, on guard...!”

Thump— thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump—

“...?”

“...???”

“...?”

Before Minhyuk could even finish his words, the heads of fifteen of the best rankers that were standing near Minhyuk fell on the ground. Gaerna’s message immediately followed after that.

[The Absolute Gods saw it clearly. The moment she disappeared, bright red blood began to spurt from the throats of their men.]

“What...!”

Thump— thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump—

The heads of their allies began to fall one after the other, even though Minhyuk had started to chase after her. Only after he had concentrated deeply was he able to see where she was.

It seems like Gaerna had developed the ability to use skills. Tentacles once again stretched out from her mouth and latched onto the dead bodies of the strong from one side to another.

Gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp—

“Kyahahahahahahack! It’s so deliciouuuuuuus!”

Those that were still alive and dealing with the hundreds of thousands of parasitic soldiers turned to look at Gaerna, who had become even more powerful. All of their eyes were stained with terror and shock.

Rumbleeeeeeee—

One hit of her blade-like arms and hundreds of the supremes’ heads fell down.

[In just an instant, Gaerna had killed plenty of the Divine Army’s troops.]

“Kiheheheheheheck!”

Gaerna appeared right in front of Minhyuk.

“Protect Minhyuk!!!”

“Protect the Alliance’s King!!!”

If the Alliance’s King died, then everything would be over. Everyone tried to run to Minhyuk’s aid but the parasitic soldiers gathered around them and intercepted their path.

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

One swing of Gaerna’s arm and Minhyuk’s body was slashed six times in a row.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

“Keuhaaaaaaaaaack!”

[Your HP has dropped below 85%.]

The attack was very powerful and could neither be avoided or prevented. Of course, Minhyuk did not miss the time to open up the distance between them by using Like the Wind.

Twitch, twitch, twitch—

However, Gaerna came after him and swung her arms again, releasing dozens of invisible blades that hacked Minhyuk's body.

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

Everyone fell into despair. Only two seconds had passed. However, in that short amount of time, the Alliance's King was already brought to the brink of death.

“Sword of...”

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

Gaerna pushed Minhyuk even further before he could even finish using his skills.

“You. Are. The. Most. Delicious. Looking. One. Do. You. Know. That?” Gaerna spat each word with her creepy voice, a hideous grin curling on her mouth.

Spear God Ben could be seen rushing forward to try and help Minhyuk, who was already bleeding all over. However, Gaerna's attacks were just too fast. All Minhyuk could do was hurriedly take out the Almond of Subordinates.

The problem was Gaerna noticed and had already restrained him. She did not allow him to do anything at all. He just sat there, his blood dripping all over.

“It's the end...”

Someone's whisper rang in the battlefield. Meanwhile, the commentators were left speechless while the viewers watched their screens with ugly looks on their faces.

[The Battle God hurriedly drew his own sword. He ended up fighting personally against Gaerna.]

Gaerna's message reverberated in the area followed by her grating laughter.

“Kihehehehehehehehek! The Battle God will not come here. Kihehehehehehehehe!”

[The Battle God sealed and locked Gaerna away.]

“No one will be able to lock me up now. Kihehehehehehehehek!”

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that rules and commands all of the armies, has spoken!]

“...Kiheeeek?”

Just then, a deep and majestic voice, a voice that none of the users or the viewers from all over the world had heard before, rang in the battlefield.

[You're wrong.]

Gaerna could never forget the gruesome voice of the Battle God. As for the viewers, all of them held their breath at the booming bass that rang in their ears.

The Battle God's greatest regret was the fact that he could only seal Gaerna and not kill her. As for Gaerna, she felt fortunate that she would no longer be able to meet such a horrible bastard. But now, that bastard's voice was ringing in her ears.

[The brightest sun that has received my recognition.]

Flash—

The sky was torn apart revealing a man wearing a red crown and holding a red sword in his hands, with a white cape carrying the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together hanging on his back. Everyone knew who this man was.

The Red Sword Knights also stood by his side in the sky while glaring coldly at Gaerna's army. The Red Sword Knights was a knight order that transcended even the Swords of the Gods. These powerful knights drew their swords out in unison.

[The strongest knight that has received my recognition.]

A torrential downpour of ten thousand sword lights poured down and swept away the parasitic soldiers as the Red Sword Knights swung their swords down.

Exploding with a red aura, Brod jumped down and struck Gaerna's head with his sword.

[On my behalf.]

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!!!”

Staaaaaaaaab—

The Battle God's majestic and deep booming voice rang loudly in the world's ears as Brod's sword stabbed deeply in Gaerna's head.

[He will bring punishment unto you.]

Chapter 737: God of Birth Gaerna

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!!!” Gaerna shrieked, her eyes trailing after the falling Brod.

She tried to hurriedly move out of the way but it did not work out at all. The powerful force that Brod was emitting was enough to make Gaerna, one of the Six Monster Gods, to feel numb all over.

Staaaaaaaaaaaaab—

Brod's red sword pierced through Gaerna's thick and sturdy-looking mantis head. That first attack did not kill her, so he stabbed her head once again, causing her to scream uncontrollably once more.

“Kihyaaaaaaaaack—!”

Brod frowned as he pulled his sword out of Gaerna's head. She struggled like crazy and swung her blade-like arms fiercely.

“Graaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!” Gaerna shrieked strangely, running around amok while green blood dripped down her mouth. “It hurts! Hurts! Hurts! Hurts! It huuuuuuuuuuuuuurt!”

The entire world held their breath. Who was Brod? He was known as the Beyond the Heavens' Sword and the Absolute God's Sword. He was also known as Minhyuk's faithful and loyal vassal. However, the announcement that Brod was the brightest Sun that the Battle God had recognized really struck them.

The only person that was called the Sun right now was Nerva. However, the fact that the Battle God admitted that he was the only 'Sun' that he had recognized meant that he cared more about Brod in the past.

"Crazy..."

"What the hell? How many strong people are with Minhyuk?"

Everyone from all over the world, including the rankers present here, were looking at Minhyuk in admiration. However, the battle was not yet over. The Red Sword Knights, like falling stars, shot down from the sky while swinging their swords.

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

Just like that, the parasitic soldiers were taken out, getting swept away by their sword attacks. The entire world cheered as they watched Gaerna's mighty army begin to collapse.

"Kihyaaaaaaaaaaaaack!"

After running around like crazy, Gaerna recovered to some extent. Of course, the first thing that she did was to pull back and run away from Brod.

Swoooooooooooooosh—

The rankers could not even see her make a move.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud— thud—

Everywhere she passed by, heads rolled on the ground once again. However, Brod also made his move.

"Kihyaaaaaaaaaaaaack!"

Brod made a grab for Gaerna by the back of her head. He then controlled his sword, which was stuck on the ground, to move and aimed for Gaerna's head.

Poooooof—

Gaerna tried to think after escaping from Brod's grasp earlier. However, before she could even do so, Brod had already appeared and grabbed her by the head again.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack—

Cracks appeared all over Gaerna's body as she fell on the ground. Brod glared coldly at her and said, "This lord has never allowed you to touch His Majesty's body."

'Mercenary's Pinnacle Swordsmanship. Final Chapter.'

"Wolf's Death."

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

Hundreds of sword lights shot from Brod's sword and slashed Gaerna's body.

"Kihyaaaaaaaaack!" Gaerna shrieked, crossing her arms to try and block the attacks. But it was useless, the sword lights were too sharp and fast, piercing through her body until they dug deeply in the ground beneath her.

"Kihyaaaaaaaaack!"

Many people held their breath as they watched Gaerna scream terribly. They felt like Brod could kill Gaerna at the rate things were going.

[You have heard the Battle God's voice.]

[You have used God's Summons Parchment.]

After that, he no longer heard the Battle God's voice. Minhyuk knew that the Battle God did not do this because he viewed Minhyuk favorably. He was aware that the Battle God was worried about Brod and not himself, and that he also wanted to kill Gaerna.

'And.'

There was one thing that Minhyuk could guess after hearing the Battle God's voice urgently delivered to him.

'Does this mean that Brod can't kill Gaerna right now?'

Minhyuk had been shocked when he had first received the God's Summons Parchment. He immediately tore the parchment apart.

Riiiiip—

Hundreds of beams of lights shot out from Minhyuk's body and flew to various parts of Athenae.

Gaerna, who was stabbed in numerous places, was suffering from terrible pain.

At the same time, she was so hungry that she had to eat those humans. However, the Brightest Sun acknowledged by the Battle God would not allow her! He would not leave her alone!

She was hungry, that was why she ate those humans.

She was hungry, that was why she ate those gods.

Did she do something wrong? No. There was nothing wrong with what she did. The strong would always eat the weak. So, was she being eaten by Brod? No.

"Kihihihihihihihihihih! Kihehehehehehehehehe!"

Despite still being buried deep into the ground, Gaerna cackled. As her laughter reverberated in the world, another message followed right after.

[Gaerna, who had been defending against the Battle God, laughed.]

The damn memory from that time flashed in her head.

[She laughed.]

“Kihehehehehehehehehehe!”

[Blood spurted out from all over the Battle God’s body.]

Blood had spurted out from the body of the Battle God, the greatest and strongest Absolute God. At this point, the people realized that they had not witnessed the full extent of Gaerna’s power.

“Kihyaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Kiheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!”

“*Click, click, click, click, click!*”

The parasitic soldiers cried loudly before charging madly towards Gaerna.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!

Gaerna opened her mandibles, its opening growing into a thirty meter wide pit. Brod, the Red Sword Knights, and the supremes immediately noticed something unusual and tried to stop her.

[Gaerna’s Gluttony has been triggered!]

[Gaerna’s Gluttony cannot be resisted!]

Even if they wanted to stop her, they could not approach her. In the end, all they could do was watch Gaerna prey on her parasitic soldiers. This fact made Brod and the supremes devastated.

But then, Alexander’s expression turned weird.

[God is calling upon you.]

[You will be forced to log out once you answer God’s call!]

[Those that will choose to answer God’s call will only receive the penalty of not being able to access and connect to the game for forced log out!]

“...?”

Alexander turned his head and looked at Minhyuk. He could see that Minhyuk’s hair had already grown longer while his eyes had taken on a reddish hue. The sight brought shock to Alexander. ‘*Don’t tell me...*’

At the same time, the same notifications rang in the ears of the other supremes.

[God is calling upon you.]

[You will be forced to log out once you answer God’s call!]

[Those that will choose to answer God’s call will only receive the penalty of not being able to access and connect to the game for forced log out!]

Everyone panicked for a very brief moment.

Gulp—

Their eyes were still glued to Gaerna, who was eating her parasitic soldiers. This meant that once she was done with that, she would be in her complete form and likely exerting her full strength. In that tense and nerve-wracking moment, a person answered God’s call first.

“I answer God’s call.”

Everyone turned to look at the direction of the voice. The person that answered God’s call was none other than Calauhel.

Calauhel looked at Minhyuk. For him, he hated and resented Minhyuk more than anybody else. In fact, he felt annoyed at his very existence. However, Calauhel also knew that the only person that could end this war right now was Minhyuk.

Alexander immediately said after him, “I will answer.”

“Answer!”

“I will answer the call!!!”

Anyway, there was a high chance that they would die here. The fact that those that would answer the call would not receive any penalty except for the forced logout penalty where they could not access the game for some time was already a sweet deal.

“Deliciooooooooouuuuuuuuuus!”

A creepy and spine-chilling voice reverberated in the world as the sky above them turned red.

[Gaerna’s Craze has been triggered.]

[All of Gaerna’s abilities will increase by 70% and her attributed skills will also be available while Gaerna’s Craze is in effect!]

[The Craze’s duration is five minutes.]

Then, Gaerna’s message immediately followed.

[When Gaerna went into a craze for five minutes, a fifth of the Land of the Gods disappeared without a trace.]

The message was incredibly startling. Everyone could only hold their breaths and watch what would unfold next.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk just stood there and continued to look at the sky as these notifications rang in his ears.

[You have used God’s Summons!]

[While using God’s Summons...]

[You cannot move.]

[The enemies will not be able to inflict any harm upon your body!]

Then, blood began to pour down from the red sky.

Kyahahahahahahahahahahaha!

Gaerna squeezed herself out of the ground, her skin a bright and glaring red. Then, with a voice that sounded like grating metal, she said, “Die.”

[God’s Catastrophe has unfolded.]

[One swing of Gaerna's arms and tens of thousands of blades will appear and destroy her enemies.]

Slaaaaaaaaaaaaash—

Tens of thousands of blades appeared and reaped the lives of many present, and turned them into nothing but ashes. Even the ground, the trees, the rocks, everything that her arms passed by disappeared without a trace.

With just one swing of Gaerna's arms, more than 800 supremes died. The aftermath of the attack also swept away several Red Sword Knights, forcing them to scatter in the wind.

“Dieeeee!”

Slaaaaaaaaaaaaash—

Once again, tens of thousands of blades appeared. This time, they flew towards Alexander. Alexander felt his body get torn into pieces, like paper being ripped apart. However, his head had turned to look at Minhyuk.

“Dieeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!”

Another swing and Brod was pushed back. This time, it was Calauhel and God of Archery Miao that turned into ashes, their gazes fixed upon Minhyuk as they slowly disappeared.

“Die! Die! Die! Dieeeee!!!”

Everyone on the ground was dying one after the other. In just an instant, more than 6,000 of the supremes had disappeared. As for the remaining 2,000-odd, they were left in the pits of despair.

“Die! Die! Die! Die! Kekekekekekekekeke!!!”

“Ugh, aaaaaaaaaaargh!!!”

“Crazy...”

“I don't want to die!”

A scream rang out. For NPCs, this was very frustrating. Once they died here, they would truly and utterly be dead. Some of them collapsed on the ground, crying. Some wielded their sword until their very last breath.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

Only one man stood firm in the face of these deaths. Fortunately, Minhyuk's vassals were able to survive thanks to Elizabeth's barrier.

“Kekekekekekekekeke!”

[The Battle God managed to survive and prevent God's Disaster and seal Gaerna.]

“No one will be able to stop me now! Kekekekekekekeke!”

A cloud of dust bloomed from this now barren land hiding Minhyuk from view, who was bathing in bright light.

Gaerna was not an idiot. She planned to run away before Minhyuk could even trigger his power. So, she spread her wings and shot out from the thick cloud of dust to the sky above.

“Kikikikikikikiiii!!!”

[If Gaerna escapes, then the only one that will be able to catch and kill her would be the Luvien Empire.]

[It seems like they have no other choice but to let Gaerna escape.]

[Many have already died. Based on our estimations, there's only less than 1,000 of the strongest rankers that have survived this battle.]

Gaerna, who had already flown to the sky, smiled strangely as she tried to turn around. However, the Battle God's voice rang loudly in her ears.

[The Stars have answered God's call.]

The red sky suddenly turned dark. Immediately after that, tens of thousands of stars started to fall from the dark sky. The falling stars burst into a bright and blinding light that surrounded and engulfed Gaerna. In just a blink, Minhyuk, with red hair reaching up to his waist, flew and appeared in front of Gaerna.

[Continental Emperor Ellie has answered God's call.]

[Mercenary King Venteio has answered God's call.]

[Elven King Argon has answered God's call.]

[Great Demon Gremory...God's call.]

[Player Locke...God's call.]

[Player Alexander...God's call.]

[Sword God Valen...God's call.]

As the bright light slowly disappeared, Gaerna was horrified to see countless translucent figures appear with her enemy.

[The Ones that responded to God's call can use their 'One Shot Kill Skill' once!]

Gaerna did not have any path for escape.

Sword God Valen's soul stood next to Minhyuk. God's Summons was an item that allowed God to ask all of the people that he had connection with, whether they be players, NPCs, or even the dead NPCs, for their ultimate lethal attacks.

All of the people that answered Minhyuk's call pointed their weapons at Gaerna. Sword Emperor Ellie and Sword God Valen pointed their swords at her. Genie prepared to swing her whip while Locke stood ready with his axes. Elven King Argon pulled the strings of his bows as the Dragon King raised his trident and pointed it at Gaerna's neck. In fact, everyone, including the players, were moving according to the will of the system.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeeeeeck!” Gaerna, who realized that she had lost her chance to escape, shrieked.

Minhyuk held his sword tightly as he triggered the Sword of Absolute Death. With that as the signal, everyone began to cast their own One Shot Kill Skills.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

Tens of thousands of the strongest skills poured out and struck Gaerna's body. Attacks from swords, arrows, spears, axes, magic, holy magic, and even the stars exploded in the sky.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The light created by these explosions illuminated and shook the entire Athenae.

Rumbleeeeeeeeeeeee—

Amidst the rumbling and shaking world, this notification rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[You have killed Gaerna!]

Chapter 738: God of Birth Gaerna

The ones that had connections with Minhyuk, even the ones that had only seen his face once, received the same notifications. For the players, these were the notifications that rang in their ears.

[God is calling upon you.]

[If you respond to God's call, your One Shot Kill Skill will be activated.]

[Even if you are forced to log out, the skill will still be controlled under the AI's control.]

[You will be forced to log out once you answer God's call!]

[Those that choose to answer God's call will only receive the penalty of not being able to access and connect to the game for forced log out!]

For the NPCs, instead of the notifications, it came to them in the form of God's holy and sacred voice.

[The lowest God is asking for your help.]

[If you respond to this request, 50% of your power will disappear for a day.]

Fortunately, they would not incur any huge penalties. Because of that, many of the NPCs that cherished and loved the lowest God answered his call.

The dark sky was painted with the picturesque scene of tens of thousands of lethal skills. Seeing the world's best and strongest gathered around like that brought forth a renewed hope to the people from all over the world. Finally, Gaerna's body was torn to pieces.

These notifications rang loudly across the world.

[The Allied Army has succeeded in killing Gaerna.]

[Rewards will be given to the members of the Allied Army based on their contributions.]

[You joined the Allied Army. Your EXP Acquisition Rate and Item Drop Rate will triple for two weeks.]

[You have gained 1 platinum.]

[You have acquired the Allied Army's Brilliant Sword.]

[You will receive rewards for your contributions.]

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

[You have gained 1 platinum.]

[You have acquired 20 Mandala Recovery Potions.]

[You have acquired 20 Mandala Mana Potions.]

[You have acquired 3 Aesthnon Ores.]

These were the rewards for those that had made low or vague contributions. These rewards were fixed. As for the people that have made higher contributions, it was natural that they would receive better rewards and compensation.

[You will receive rewards for your contributions.]

[You have gained 6,000,000,000,000 EXP.]

[You have gained 634 platinum.]

[...acquired 100 Mandala's Excellent Recovery Potions.]

These were the notifications received by the players that survived the battle. Of course, these were also the same notifications received by the players that had been forced to log out too.

The commentators quickly caught wind of the contents of the rewards.

[The distributed rewards are amazing.]

[Among all of the episode quests' rewards, this has got to be the most generous one.]

[Their EXP Acquisition and Item Drop rates will triple. That means that they can gain a huge increase in their level and plenty of special items during the two week duration.]

[Most of the players that participated in the war and joined the Allied Army came from the Qingdao Kingdom and Rothsilde Kingdom. However, there are still plenty of other players that joined as mercenaries. To be honest, they had been ridiculed by the others, no?]

[That's right. There were plenty of mocking comments in the community sites with some of them saying, 'You'll definitely receive penalties for your death.']

[Those naysayers must be turning green from envy right now.]

[As much as we care about the generous rewards of this episode quest, plenty of people are also paying attention to Food God Minhyuk.]

[The entire world is wondering what kind of rewards he has received.]

That was right. The chosen Alliance's King would receive 1.5x more rewards if they successfully killed Gaerna. On top of that, the Alliance's King would have the highest contributions. In fact, watching the hunt for Gaerna, everyone was sure that Brod, Minhyuk and those that had been called using God's Summons were the ones with the greatest contributions. That was why many were paying attention to the rewards that Minhyuk had received.

Minhyuk stood there shining a brilliant red, just like the sun among the stars in the dark sky. When he looked around, he saw many people standing beside him in the sky looking at him. Many of them were the players that had been forced to logout and were being controlled by AI.

But among them, there was one person that he sorely missed. The person that stood at the forefront and the representative of all of these people, Sword God Valen. Valen had a soft and gentle smile on his face as he looked at Minhyuk. Of course, Minhyuk was looking at him with a smile of his own.

“Thank you,” Valen said after looking at the boy for a very long time. In the end, Valen slowly disappeared with the wind.

Minhyuk knew what Valen meant by those words. The man was thanking him for becoming a great person and for still being healthy and lively. He was also thanking him for allowing them to meet once again. Those two words held plenty of meaning for the two of them.

“I’m the one that should thank you, Instructor.”

Minhyuk smiled softly, before bowing his head in gratitude to the ones that answered his call. Sword Emperor Ellie and Mercenary King Venteio were smiling softly at him, pleased looks on their faces. Even Overlord Raldo approached him and knocked his shoulders before they disappeared into thin air. Minhyuk slowly landed on the ground not long after, his red hair turning back to its usual black color. He had also heard the notifications for the rewards.

Meanwhile, the entire world was left in a frenzy.

[Did anyone check the rankings?]

[Why? What’s the matter?]

[OMG...!]

Exclamations rang out everywhere. Minhyuk had recently attracted the attention of many people from all over the world because of his abrupt and shocking burst of increase in level. Back then, his rapid growth had placed him around the late 200s in rankings. But now, there was another change in the ranking.

[The 8th place...?]

[The Food God is ranked 8th...]

[He was at rank 276 up until yesterday though?]

[No. How much did his level increase in one go?]

[He’s at Level 596 now.]

[Only a few left before Level 600...]

A commotion broke out.

‘How amazing would the other rewards be if his EXP increased by this much?’

However, Minhyuk’s expression was dark, as he landed on the ground. From what he knew, more than three million troops deployed in this war, this number included the troops sent by different

empires and kingdoms, as well as the members of the Allied Army. However, only 600 of these people survived. Fortunately, none of Minhyuk's men died or got seriously injured.

The viewers were looking at Minhyuk in confusion. Minhyuk should have been happy since Gaerna's hunt was over, but his expression told a different story. It was to be expected, after all, he believed the NPCs were also people too, the people that lived in this world.

Minhyuk slowly approached the bodies that had not yet disappeared, touching the wrists of one of the soldiers that held a young girl's hair tie. Then, the notifications rang in his ears.

[You have gained Roald's favor.]

[You have gained Brechtri's favor.]

[You have gained Raecor's favor.]

[...Cracker's favor.]

Notifications constantly rang in Minhyuk's ears. There were still a considerable number of NPCs standing together with the players among the surviving supremes. They would probably receive the support of the Rothschild Kingdom and the Qingdao Kingdom. However, Minhyuk was able to gain their favor just by showing sympathy to the dead soldiers of another kingdom.

'Instead of enjoying victory first, the king of a nation is honoring the dead instead.'

'He truly is a very considerate and understanding king.'

'If he is my king, then I will most definitely rest assured, even if I died.'

Others would think that this was just a show that Minhyuk was doing. However, he was not doing this for show. He actually felt sad and sorry for the lives that were lost here.

Meanwhile, there was a person that was watching what he was doing in reality.

Calauhel felt a whirlwind of emotion engulf his entire being as he watched Minhyuk stroke the tanned wrist of a dead soldier on TV. He had also realized some things about the bond that he had with the NPCs of the game through this incident.

'Is it because of that? Is that the reason why a lot of people follow you?'

Calauhel was the head of Blackstone. There were also a lot of people that followed him. However, if one went into the specifics, they only followed him because they believed and trusted his money.

Minhyuk might be the successor of Ilhwa Group, but he was not as rich as Calauhel. However, the people that followed him were all loyal to him. Calauhel now realized why.

He turned to look at the butler behind him. He looked at him for a moment before saying, "Deposit three hundred billion into that account."

"Three hundred billion?!"

The butler almost choked on his own saliva when he heard the amount. However, Calauhel remained nonchalant. Of course, three hundred billion was still a huge amount, even for someone like him.

However, he had also made huge contributions during Gaerna's hunt and had received huge rewards. In fact, the Rothschild Kingdom was the one that took the lead in hunting Gaerna so the benefits that they would receive would definitely be huge. On top of that, Calauhel would be very happy if he could buy a relationship with Minhyuk with just this much money.

Well, Minhyuk had originally asked him for 200 billion. However, he had told him that he would need to add another 50 billion if he went to find him again. As for the remaining 50 billion? It was just a small consideration from Calauhel in support of Minhyuk.

Then, on the monitor, Minhyuk began to speak.

.

[We gained victory.]

They have protected Athenae from one of the Six Monster Gods.

[However, many of us have died. Some of us probably lost their fathers, their sons, their daughters, or even their wives.]

On the path of her destruction, Gaerna had also attacked several ordinary and mediocre territories.

The survivors remained silent at his words. The same was true for all of the viewers that watched them from all over the world. The viewers were empathizing. They were wondering what they would feel if they were there.

Someone thought, *'More than the gains and profits, you give precedence to the heart and the minds of your people. Is that the kind of person you are?'*

Even Calauhel had thought that way. All he could do was look at Minhyuk while chuckling bitterly to himself.

[Let us mourn for their deaths.]

The survivors all prayed silently together with Minhyuk. Calauhel also remained silent as if he was there too.

[For those that died today, I will give...]

'Fifty billion. It's not such a bad loss to give to someone like that, no?'

[Five...]

Minhyuk hesitated in his words.

Then, the butler said, "Young Master, I have deposited the money."

"Wait. Five...?" Calauhel said, his eyes focused on Minhyuk's lips. Then, Minhyuk quickly changed his words.

[One hundred billion.]

"...?"

[The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's finances are currently unstable. This is because the number of our population keeps on increasing which means that we have to undergo a never-ending process of expanding our territories.]

“...?”

[However, I have gained a lot during Gaerna’s hunt and will dispose of some of them to raise 100 billion to soothe the hearts of those that had been affected by this battle.]

“...But that’s my money?”

[We will make it so we can help you recover from the damages of this war.]

“No. Wait...”

Calauhel pondered deeply. Minhyuk had originally asked for 200 billion. But then, he charged him 250 billion because he said that it would be an additional 50 billion, and was the cost of Minhyuk’s ‘disappointment’. Calauhel also gave him an additional 50 billion to support him. In other words, the 100 billion that Minhyuk offered for the dead was the money that he gained from Calauhel.

[I will never forget those that sacrificed their lives and died today. I hope that this money will help soothe the wounds and the pain that you will feel even for a brief moment.]

[Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!]

[Long live Beyond the Heaveeeeeeeens!!!]

[Long live Food God Minhyuuuuuuuuuuuk!!!]

Calauhel was the one that foot the bill, but Minhyuk was the one that gained popularity and fame. When he thought back on it, he realized that Minhyuk had started his sentence earlier with ‘five...’. That meant that he only planned to give fifty billion initially.

“Hey, you \$%#^@\$!#\$!@#!!!”

The portal sites all over the world were plastered with ‘Minhyuk’s 100 billion donation’, coupled with articles praising Minhyuk’s generosity. There was even someone that praised Minhyuk for raising 100 billion by disposing of most of the artifacts that he had gained during Gaerna’s hunt. Basically, all of them praised Minhyuk.

“This damn bastard! @#!@#!@#%\$!\$#!”

Calauhel, who spent another 50 billion because of his consideration and warm feelings for the man, screamed loudly.

Chapter 739: God of Birth Gaerna

One man turned the entire world upside down. In fact, his name was plastered on every portal site in existence.

[Food God Minhyuk has donated a huge sum of 100 billion for those that were affected by Gaerna.]

[According to reports, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s finances are not doing well.]

[The people of Korea: He’s working hard to campaign so that the people will buy from Ilhwa Group.]

[Ilhwa Group’s stock prices have seen a dramatic increase.]

[Food God Minhyuk: Chosen as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.]

[The hundred billion won distributed to the various kingdoms and empires that fell victim to Gaerna. The kingdoms and empires are now showing a favorable impression toward Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[Where was the Luvien Empire during Gaerna's hunt? The kingdoms and empires in the world of Athenae might be showing favor to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom but they are acting coldly toward the Luvien Empire.]

[Experts: We can assume that Food God Minhyuk has received quite a lot of rewards to willingly offer 100 billion to help the victims of Gaerna.]

[Experts: The value of the Food God's 100 billion won is not something that can be bought so easily.]

[Minhyuk ranked first in 'Who do Teens Want to be Like the Most?']

[Expert Im Tae-Ho says that the Food God's worth is 100 billion won.]

[What is the 'worth' that the expert is talking about?]

[Many kingdoms and empires have received damage from Gaerna's hunt. There are even small nations that received so much damage that it will be very hard for them to recover. The place where Gaerna appeared was in the vicinity where three small nations were gathered. They sent their soldiers out the moment they saw Gaerna advance and were promptly wiped out. Something like this could be considered as an irredeemable crisis for small kingdoms and nations like them. However, the king of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom has lent them a helping hand during their time of great crisis.]

[Then, that means that Food God Minhyuk bought the hearts of those kingdoms and empires with just 100 billion won?]

[That's right. Minhyuk is obviously a very clever person. Bear in mind, there were only about 600 survivors. These are talented people that have received the support from their respective kingdoms and empires. They will obviously run to their kings and emperors and say, 'You have to forge a close relationship with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, Your Majesty!']

[Listening to it, I can say that it's highly likely to happen.]

[We don't know if this is what Food God Minhyuk intended to do but his actions have ensured that he has taken a step closer to establishing his own empire.]

As various articles and stories poured out about the Food God, Minhyuk's value continued to rise. Even famous celebrities and third-generation chaebol ladies were explicitly stating their favor toward Minhyuk on SNS.

[Did you see what Choego Group's Kim Hae-Ri has posted on SNS?]

[That guy who's very hot these days? I want to meet him. That's what she said, right? I'm pretty sure she's saying this so she can meet Minhyuk.]

[Kim Hae-Ri is that person that we call Mom's Favorite, right? She is famous for her good personality, her celebrity-like looks, and she's even the daughter of the Choego Group's chairman...]

[Ever since Kim Hae-Ri revealed her feelings on SNS, celebrities and popular figures have stopped posting on SNS.]

[Is it because they can't compete with her?]

[What's more, the Ilhwa Group and the Choego Group are on fairly good terms.]

[Wow. I'm so jealous of Minhyuk. Kim Hae-Ri...]

The Choego Group was not as big as the Ilhwa Group or the Daehan Group, but it was still one of the top ten of Korea's conglomerates.

Although Kim Hae-Ri was a third generation chaebol, she graduated from Harvard University in America and was renowned for her good deeds. She also received the love of many for her outstanding beauty. Considering that these things were quite unusual for someone that was just a third generation chaebol, it might be an indication of how much Kim Hae-Ri was considered as the best woman of her era.

While so many people were paying attention to him, Minnyuk was busy checking the rewards that he received alone in his office.

[You have killed Gaerna.]

[You were the Alliance's King during Gaerna's Hunt.]

[The rewards that you will receive will be better than others.]

[You have made surprisingly great contributions in Gaerna's hunt. The rewards that you will receive will be better.]

[You have gained 32,513 platinum.]

[You have gained 11,313,111,000 EXP.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[...leveled up.]

[...leveled up.]

[...leveled up.]

[You have acquired Gaerna's Life Elixir (2).]

[You have acquired Gaerna's Map to Overcome One's Limitations.]

[You have acquired Gaerna's Parasitic Ring.]

[You have acquired The Master of Aeropia's Necklace.]

[You have acquired the Six Monster Gods' Skill Creation Book.]

[You have gained 3 God's SP.]

[You will receive rewards based on your contribution.]

[You have gained 30,000,000,000 EXP.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have gained 52,311 platinum.]

[You have acquired 5 Mandala's Elixir.]

[You have acquired 1 Mandala's Growth Potion.]

[You have acquired Mandala's Treasure Chest.]

[You have acquired Mandala's Treasure Hunting Map.]

[You have gained 200 special Stat Points (STP).]

He had gained more than 50,000 platinum. Just this alone proved that the rewards this time were far more unconventional and grander than he had imagined. Of course, in Minhyuk's case, this might be because he was appointed as the Alliance's King and had made great contributions.

Minhyuk then left that behind and looked at the list of his rewards. First was the Mandala's Growth Potion. Once the potion was consumed, the user's EXP Acquisition Rate will increase by 30x for an entire hour.

'What? Isn't this too much of a cheat?'

Of course, the growth potion was like a double-edged sword. In fact, if he took everything in consideration, consuming an EXP potion that had a two-week duration might be more beneficial than this one. However, what if he could gain a huge amount of EXP in an hour?

'Then, it would be better than taking several week-long EXP potions.'

As for the Mandala's Elixir, it was an exceptional recovery potion that money could not buy.

'It can recover your HP and MP to 100% and has no cooldown? On top of that, it can also increase your defensive power by 20%?'

The only word that could come out of Minhyuk's mouth was 'crazy.'

There was also the Mandala's Treasure Chest. It was an item that worked just like any other Treasure Chest where one would randomly get a potion made by Mandala once opened. Mandala's Treasure Hunting Map was an item that would allow the item user to find whatever they wanted.

Then, there were the 200 special STPs. These were points that could increase stats that could not be increased by regular STPs, like Will and DEX. Minhyuk had actually received 200 of them. However, he decided not to use them for now.

Minhyuk then turned his attention to the rewards that he received for killing Gaerna. The first one was Gaerna's Life Elixir.

'You can even save the dead with this...?'

It was a completely crazy elixir with an astronomical value. The next one was Gaerna's Map to Overcome One's Limitations.

'There's someone in Beyond the Heavens that needs this.'

Minhyuk chuckled. The effect of the item was none other than locating a way to overcome the person's limits. Next was the Master of Aeropia's Necklace.

'This is a token of recognition that recognizes one as the master of the Insect Kingdom...'

To put it simply, Gaerna was the Queen of Insects. Aeropia was the land of insects. Minhyuk stared at the item and thought that it would probably be able to contribute to the development of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom into an empire.

But the most notable item was the Six Monster Gods' Skill Creation Book. It allowed the user to combine the skills in their possession or create the skills that they wanted. Minhyuk believed that the use of this item needed careful consideration.

'If it's not too absurd, then maybe it's possible?'

Perhaps Minhyuk could use this to create a skill that was along the lines of Double Food, Double Skill, or maybe something along the lines of Sword of Absolute Death.

'This is amazing.'

Even though Gaerna did not drop any outstanding artifacts, the rewards that Minhyuk received were more than satisfactory. The only thing that he was disappointed about was, of course, regarding food.

'There's nothing here that I can eat. Tch.'

However, there was really no need for him to feel sad. After all, the Mandala's Treasure Hunting Map could help him find whatever it was that he wanted.

'I need to take a break.'

Minhyuk had rescued Brod and killed one of the Six Monster Gods, Gaerna, within the span of a short time. He badly needed to take a break.

'Tomorrow's Christmas. Ah. It's also Genie's birthday.'

Minhyuk recalled the Beyond the Heavens' Vice Guild Master Genie. Christmas was just right around the corner, which meant that it was his dear old friend's birthday.

After going around the kingdom's capital once, Minhyuk logged out of the game.

Royal Department Store was owned by the Ilhwa Group, located in Gangnam with various luxury stores located inside.

Inside one of the world-renowned luxury brand's stores, a woman in her early twenties was seen bowing down while the rest of the staff around her were fidgeting.

"F*ck, I already told you. My baby at home accidentally took off the tag. This has never been worn. But you're telling me that you can't give me a refund because of your regulations? F*ck that."

"Sir, according to our regulations, products with their tags removed..."

“No. The tag was just removed. Ah, I *really* don’t like the way this girl talks to me.”

Kim Heung-Soo, a man in his early thirties, was a VIP client that spent around a million won per year at the Royal Department Store. However, he brought forward a pair of luxury shoes that had clear signs of wear and was demanding a refund.

The truth was, Kim Heung-Soo knew that he would not be able to get a refund with this. However, he was in a very bad mood today and wanted to abuse his power as a VIP and show off his superiority.

Surprisingly enough, something like this often happened in the Royal Department Store.

“We’re very sorry, sir.”

In the end, the employee in her early twenties, Im Yoon-Ah, bit her lips and apologized even though she did not know what she was apologizing for.

“But you don’t look sorry at all?” Kim Heung-Soo rolled his eyes. He found it unpleasant to hear that products with their tags removed were not eligible for refund. Then, he gestured with his eyes, glancing on the floor beneath them.

“That... sir. No matter how much you’re a VIP, that’s a bit...”

The manager immediately noticed the meaning of his gesture and tried to stop him.

“Should I lodge a formal complaint?”

Complaints from VIP were very fatal. There had never been a case where the department stores protected their employees after a complaint. They would always protect their customers. This was how ordinary department stores usually worked.

However, the reason why Im Yoon-Ah took a job at the Royal Department Store was because of something else. The representative of the Royal Department Store had recently been changed and became Ilhwa Group’s successor, Minhyuk.

Minhyuk had mentioned something when he went around the department store recently.

—Customers might be king but the staff is my family. As my family, if someone dares to speak informally to you, then speak informally to them. If they cursed at you, then curse at them too. I, and Ilhwa Group’s legal team, will take responsibility for you.

Lim Yoon-Ah brooded over those words.

Once again, Kim Heung-Soo glanced at the floor. It was a gesture that wanted her to kneel down on his feet. He wondered if her trembling legs would drop to the ground.

“This b*tch. If you did something wrong to your customers then you have to apologize...”

‘If a customer speaks informally, then speak informally to them.’

Thus, Im Yoon-Ah steeled herself and shouted, “You f*cking bastard! How dare you call me b*tch! You’re the one that’s a f*cking mother*cking b*tch!!!”

“...”

“...”

A moment of silence passed. Everyone in the store was flustered. At that moment, Kim Heung-Soo raised his arms.

“This crazy b*tch! Is this how the Royal Department Store treats their customers?! You curse at them?!”

Then, he tried to swing his arm. Im Yoon-Ah closed her eyes tightly to prepare for the impact.

“I was the one that ordered it. You really are a shitty pig-like bastard, huh?”

“...”

Kim Heung-Soo’s arm stopped as he turned to look back.

A 185-centimeter-tall man clad in a fitted black suit with a face that seemed to be sculpted by the gods, stood with his hands in his pockets. There were dozens of the department store’s executives standing behind him too.

“I ordered them to speak informally if any customer spoke informally to them, and curse if the customers cursed at them. ”

Kim Heung-Soo knew this man’s name. He was the owner of the Royal Department Store and the heir to Ilhwa Group. He was the most influential person in the world right now, and with a simple order, it could break his company and turn it into ruins in just a week.

With dozens of executives lined up behind him, he stood in front of Kim Heung-Soo and asked, “Got a problem with that?”

Chapter 740: God of Birth Gaerna

There was a man that became the most famous person in the world in just a few days. He was none other than Minhyuk from the virtual reality game, Athenae.

Donating 100 billion won, which was a huge amount of money, was enough to grab even the attention of those that were not interested in Athenae. Most would have clicked on his name at least once on the portal sites. Minhyuk’s current value was astronomical. Even the fact that he was able to overcome his eating addiction was stirring the hearts of the people. On top of that, he was known as a good man.

Such a promising man was currently in front of Kim Heung-Soo asking, “Got a problem with that?”

“...”

Kim Heung-Soo was the type of person that climbed to where he was because their company suddenly did well. Such a person usually believed that they were either the king or the god of this world.

That was why, Kim Heung-Soo, intimidated as he might be, stuttered, “How dare you speak informally?! You’re still young and immature! Do you think you can curse at your VIPs?!”

Indeed, Kim Heung-Soo was a VIP at the Royal Department Store and he had his own pride too.

“No, aren’t you the president of this department store? Does the president even have the right to tell your employees to curse at their VIPs?!!!”

.

At that question, Minhyuk looked back at all of his employees and executives. “I’m a president but I can’t even protect my own people? What kind of president would I be if I can’t even do something like that?”

Minhyuk’s voice turned cold as he slowly exuded the charisma that a king in Athenae could show.

“What the hell? Just for one employee...”

“The Ilhwa Group is a group that got to where it is today because of each and every single one of our employees.”

Kim Heung-Soo gulped dryly at Minhyuk’s words.

“The only reason you have reached such a place and standing is also because of your employees. Offended? Then, go ahead and spread rumors,” Minhyuk said as he glanced at the CCTV. “I will make sure to respond accordingly with our legal team.”

“...”

Kim Heung-Soo was left speechless.

There was no one that could win against Ilhwa Group’s legal team in the country. When it came to matters regarding Minhyuk, each and every single member of the legal team would want to step up.

Kim Heung-Soo could only stand there in a daze, his mouth opening and closing without any sound coming out of it.

Seeing him hesitate, Minhyuk said, “Scram.”

“...!”

Kim Heung-Soo hurriedly packed his used shoes and scrambled away.

Im Yoon-ah could only stare at Minhyuk with an open mouth of her own, when she saw him step up for the employees.

‘Ah...’

She recalled the conversation that she had with her manager before.

—*President Kang Minhyuk told us to speak informally when a customer speaks informally and curse when they curse at us. But do you think that will work in reality?*

—*It will all be over for us once we receive complaints.*

—*We will definitely become bums.*

Then, Minhyuk looked back at the executives and said, “Are the VIPs of the department store all like this?”

“...”

“...”

His words made the proud and arrogant executives speechless.

“Make sure you investigate the customers’ complaints thoroughly. If it’s the customer’s fault and they call out and force my employees to apologize again then I won’t stay still.”

“We understand.”

The executives answered with their heads down. Then, Minhyuk turned his head again.

Im Yoon-Ah and Minhyuk were of the same age. However, even though they were the same age, the man in front of him showed a completely different demeanor. She watched as Minhyuk recalled the majestic and charismatic expression that he displayed earlier, before replacing it with a soft and gentle smile, one that enchanted Im Yoon-Ah.

Then, he spoke warmly, “It seems like it’s going to snow on Christmas.”

He smiled brightly as he pocketed his hands and led the executives out of the store. The scene left Im Yoon-Ah, who could not take her eyes off of him, in a daze for a very long time.

Ilhwa Group.

The executives of Ilhwa Group sitting inside the meeting room were flustered and at a loss. It was all because of the global company Aepel’s buyer, Michael.

“I’ll admit that Ilhwa is at the top of South Korea and is a company that produces excellent products. However, Aepel is looking for a company that will work with us for a long time to come.”

Everyone shut their mouths at the words of Michael, the white-haired American that sat in front of them with his legs crossed.

They could easily deduce the meaning of Michael’s words. ‘*Do you think the future of Ilhwa is bright?*’

Ilhwa Group’s future was yet to be determined. Right now, Minhyuk was left in charge of their best and biggest department store in Korea to prepare him as the successor. However, that alone was not enough for them.

A rare disease was like a ticking time bomb. Even more so in cases where there had been no precedent of someone making a full and complete recovery.

Because of that, Michael judged that a contract with Ilhwa Group with Minhyuk as its successor would be impossible. After all, their future would be unstable. Besides, companies located in Japan could easily produce products of the same quality as those produced by Ilhwa Group.

“If something happens and he’s the one sitting on top of Ilhwa Group, then you will all be left in shambles.” Michael stood up and buttoned his coat. “I’ll be on my way then.”

The executives of Ilhwa Group clicked their tongues when they heard his firm refusal. Among them was Park Munsoo.

“This is a big deal. Ilhwa Group will be able to build a more solid and sturdy foundation if we can sign a contract with Aepel.”

No company was permanent. In fact, there were plenty of companies that had collapsed during the IMF crisis. However, it would be different if Ilhwa could sign a contract with Aepel.

Park Munsoo sighed, a bitter smile flashing on his face. ‘*Minhyuk, things aren’t going smoothly.*’

Michael, a major executive of Aepel, climbed inside a black sedan. Even though he was in a high position, there was only one car that accompanied him. Michael usually acted from the shadows. He might be an executive of a global leading company but his face was unknown to many.

“We will go back to America right away after having our meal.”

“...In the end, you won’t be signing a contract with Ilhwa Group?”

Ilhwa Group was the best company in Korea. The quality of their products was excellent and their staff performed well.

“We cannot invest in a company, whose future we cannot ascertain.”

Michael was very firm in this decision when it came to the contract. In fact, there was actually one more reason why he turned them down instantly.

“Daddy, are we going to meet the Food God?”

“...Isn’t the Food God playing his game right now? Don’t you think so too, princess?”

There was a little girl, who was wearing a beanie on her head, sitting next to Michael. Even though she was already nine years old, the girl was much shorter than her peers. In fact, even the size of her head and her hands were quite small.

Progeria. This was a very rare disease, and people often said, ‘*A child that ages quickly and becomes old.*’

Michael was a pragmatic person. As someone whose daughter had a rare disease, he knew better than anyone how hard it was to find treatment and cure such diseases.

Even so, Michael still loved his dear daughter Amy wholeheartedly. Amy was born in his later years. However, after they found out that Amy was plagued with progeria, his wife grew unwell from various stress factors. Eventually, she succumbed to her death after being exposed to another disease.

The child, thinner as she may be when compared to others, was the apple of his eyes. Michael knew that she would not be with him for a long time. And due to his realist nature, such thoughts made his heart break.

Patients diagnosed with progeria were said to have an average life expectancy of around thirteen years.

“Aha! Is he really in the middle of a game now? Daddy, I also want to taste the dishes that the Food God makes!”

“...So do I, my lovely daughter.” Michael smiled bitterly as he kissed his daughter on her forehead. “How about eating a delicious meal with daddy in the highest place in the country today?”

“Hmm... It’s a pity. But I’ll do it if daddy wants to do it!”

Michael smiled at the ever considerate Amy, who did not even complain once, and said, “Please go to Ilhwa Tower.”

Ilhwa Tower was the tallest building in Korea and it was constructed by Ilhwa Group. From what Michael knew, it had around 140 floors.

As their black car headed for Ilhwa Tower, Amy said, “Will it snow in Korea today?”

There was a special restaurant located on the 135th floor of Ilhwa Tower. The restaurant was created using a very small space on the 135th floor and only served three tables.

Even though the space was small, its view was the best. In fact, people from all over the world came to visit this place to taste the delicious Korean food made by the country’s best chefs. This restaurant was actually opened by Ilhwa Group.

Currently, there was a beautiful young woman and a striking young man sitting by the window of the restaurant. The Beyond the Heavens’ Vice Guild Master Genie, or Im Jihye, glanced at the beautiful view of Seoul through the window. Strangely enough, her face was flushed red.

‘It’s cozy.’

Im Jihye’s birthday was on Christmas and Minhyuk had prepared this for her birthday. For someone like her, who had Minhyuk in her heart, it was a very exciting and pleasant experience.

“I heard that their Korean food here is delicious. I really wanted to try it.”

Today was a special day for Minhyuk too.

Minhyuk and Genie had been friends for a long time now. Ever since they met again, he had only been on the receiving end of his friend’s generosity. She had looked past his eating addiction and treated him without any discrimination. He had always been grateful to her. That was why he wanted to treat her to a meal here and give her a gift.

Then, at that moment, a customer was seated on another table. The guests were very familiar faces.

‘Choego Group’s Kim Hae-Ri...?’

Kim Hae-Ri was a third generation chaebol and was the granddaughter of the Choego Group's chairman. She was actually accompanying Choego Group's Chairman Kim Tae-Seong.

"Hello, Chairman."

"Oh, Minhyuk. Did you come here for a meal?"

"Yes, Chairman. Please enjoy your meal."

Since world-renowned figures often came here, there was no fuss or commotion. However, Kim Hae-Ri had recently shown a great interest in Minhyuk. In fact, Kim Hae-Ri was actually really pretty. It was to the point that even Jihye felt inferior to her.

'She's even taller than me. Tch.'

Kim Hae-Ri was 173 centimeters tall. She was also not hiding her goodwill and interest toward Minhyuk, evident from her gaze.

At that moment, another customer came in. He was an American gentleman carrying a young girl wearing a beanie, in his arms. The man looked surprised when he made eye contact with Minhyuk, an expression that he immediately schooled back to indifference.

Then, the girl in his arms said, "It's the Food God!!!"

"Hello, little lady." Minhyuk responded, a small smile on his face.

They also sat down on their table. Everyone was amicable.

However, unlike the peaceful and friendly atmosphere outside, the kitchen was in complete chaos.

"Chef, are you alright?"

"...I made a blunder." The chef groaned as he stared at his hands that had already turned red. He had accidentally spilled boiling oil on his hands. He could have screamed from the burning pain but he knew that there was a much bigger problem than that.

"I can't cook with this hand..."

The manager could tell. It was urgent that the chef received treatment now. Furthermore, cooking with that hand was impossible at the moment.

"But outside..." The manager looked awkward and flustered.

There were the heads and successors of two companies, as well as an unidentified gentleman with a little kid. They all came here to enjoy Christmas. So, the manager hurriedly tried to explain the situation.

"The chef has injured his hand and needs to get treated immediately. I will show you to the VIP section of the omakase on the floor below. Of course, we won't take your money. We're truly sorry."

"*Cough.* Do tell him to go and see a doctor right away."

Of course, their faces were filled with disappointment. The one that felt very disappointed was the American gentleman.

“...The chef injured his hand?”

“Yes, and we have only one chef. I’m truly sorry.”

Michael truly could not hide his disappointment. Amy was the one that really wanted to come to Korea. The biggest reason why she wanted to come here was because she wanted to try Korean food.

That was also the reason why they came to this place, so they could eat the best Korean food. There was a chance that Amy did not have much time left. That was why Michael could not hide his discomfort and disappointment.

“Amy, the chef is not feeling well so we can’t eat here today.”

“Will the chef be okay?”

She was understanding, showing more concern for the chef’s well-being even though she wanted to try Korean food so much. Michael could only sigh as he hugged his daughter.

Then, the young man sitting at one of the tables said, “Would it be alright if I cook?”