

Gourmet 781

Chapter 781

Great Demon Gorac was an eccentric character. What he wanted was to have a successor that would surpass and go beyond Great Demon Verus. Because of that, the hurdles that one had to face in order to take over his mantle were terribly and brutally painful.

“Haa... haa... haa... haa...”

Elpis' voice was like grating metal, as he stood there among the corpses of the hundreds of thousands of demonic beasts that he had slain, while trying to catch his breath.

‘The Trial of the Undying Warrior.’

It was a challenge where the warrior would not die. However, the Undying One could not rest until he had killed the hundreds of thousands of demonic beasts that would appear to surround him. The challenger had to continue to fight and surpass the limits of his strength and stamina. It was basically torture.

Once the muscles in the body were overloaded, pain would start to bloom in one's body. However, Elpis ignored the pain tearing through his entire body, only focusing on cutting down all of the demonic beast around him. After doing all of that, he laughed.

“...Why are you laughing and smiling?”

Great Demon Gorac looked at Elpis in confusion. Elpis was smiling so brightly despite his ragged breathing.

‘Is he happy because he thinks he's gone beyond the final gate and will finally become my successor?’

Gorac knew that it was unlikely.

“Now...” a watery smile hung at the corners of Elpis' mouth. “I can now protect His Majesty.”

“...”

Great Demon Gorac was left speechless. Was that his only reason? Maybe that was all it was, but Gorac felt his heart shake.

‘I have no regrets.’

Even so, Gorac still did not regret choosing Elpis as his successor. In fact, he even thought that he had made the right choice.

“I want to go and see His Majesty as soon as possible.”

Hearing his words, Gorac pulled out a crystal ball that showed the scene in front of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom where the kings were shouting loudly. As Gorac liked fun and interesting things, he suggested something with a grin.

“Don’t you think that we should make the birth of the new Great Demon be a splendid affair?”

“I just want to see His Majesty quickly...”

“I’ll give around 500,000 of the Demonic Beast Army. And also my Blazing Red Carriage.”

“No. I’m just... His Majesty...”

“Ho? What do you think about this horned helmet?”

“...”

Gorac was very excited about how his successor would make his appearance to the world. Elpis could not help but tilt his head in confusion after seeing Gorac become more excited than him. However, Gorac was aware of something.

‘The humans will only believe what they see.’

This was both a small lesson and a reward for Elpis. Gorac knew what the 500,000 Demonic Beast Army and Elpis’ splendid and showy appearance represented.

Gorac grabbed Elpis by the chin and said, “With your eyes looking down on others, say this in your toughest voice, ‘Do. You. Want. To. Die?’”

“...”

Elpis was left speechless.

[The name of the newly awakened Great Demon is...]

[...none other than ‘Elpis.’]

A huge ripple spread out, affecting everyone present. The kings who were dripping in cold sweat and were trying to find a way to escape, the troops who had fainted and were foaming in the mouth, and the viewers, who were watching this scene from all over the world.

[Something unbelievable is happening right in front of us.]

[Elpis. The Beyond the Heavens’ Shield Elpis has come back as a Great Demon.]

[Elpis is the person that is hailed as the Beyond the Heavens’ Shield. Recently, his standing has been greatly reduced due to Spear God Ben, God of Snakes Elizabeth, Brod and many others.]

[Right now, he is standing in front of Minhyuk and is pledging his eternal allegiance and loyalty once again.]

[The biggest takeaway here is that Elpis is the Great Demon that inherited Gorac’s position. And he is the only one that can help others convert their race to ‘Demon.’]

[I can’t even imagine the impact and influence that this will bring going forward.]

[The Demons are well known for being well-versed in combat. The fact that players can now convert to the Demon race may open up new paths and avenues for the high rankers that find themselves unable to grow any further.]

[Have you seen the expression on the faces of the kings of Asgan Continent?]

[They look like they can't believe the scene in front of them.]

That was right. The kings could not bring themselves to believe what was happening in front of them. A mere human king had a Great Demon serving as his vassal.

What kind of a being was a Great Demon? They were beings that had terrorized and brought fear to the human race for a very long time. Great Demon Gremory and Great Demon Gorac might not have invaded the human world, but every time Great Demon Verus made his appearance, a few kingdoms would disappear from the face of the earth.

Now, a Great Demon had become a vassal of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. On top of that, he had brought a 500,000-strong Demonic Beast Army? Their momentum was enough to make everyone shake in their boots.

The kings, who had been clamoring for Minhyuk and the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to apologize for their arrogant declaration of establishing an empire, were immediately put on the spot. Elpis just looked at Minhyuk while shedding tears, a small yet delighted smile adorning his face.

Elpis was once the container for demonic energy. He had lived every single day of his life filled with despair. While living like that, he met Minhyuk. Elpis recalled how Minhyuk cooked a very delicious meal for him. One day, while looking back on everything that he had been through, Elpis found himself standing by Minhyuk's side. Elpis could not help but smile.

He had often wondered what to say, and how to repay the favor that he received from the man in front of him. Now that he had grown stronger and had taken another step further, he vowed to dedicate his life to his king.

Minhyuk looked at the crying Elpis and said, "Have you eaten, Elpis?"

"..."

Minhyuk was aware of the struggles and hardships that Elpis had gone through to become the Great Demon. Right now, the best thing that he could do was to welcome him warmly.

But then, at that moment, King Roath took a step forward. King Roath was the main instigator and the main pillar of the kings present here. He was also the one with the loudest voice, denouncing Minhyuk's declaration. Among these kings, King Roath had the largest kingdom. The other kings, who watched him take a step forward and release his kingly charisma, gulped dryly.

'What is he trying to do?'

'No way. Is he still going to insist on that with the Great Demon in front of him?'

Then, King Roath, who was now laying on the charisma without holding back, chuckled as he looked around and said, "Beyond the Heavens' King!"

With the loudest voice that he could muster, he said, "Congratulations and celebrations! Congratulations on receiving Great Demon Elpis as your vassal once again!"

“???”

“???”

“???”

The kings all tilted their heads in confusion. They were all thinking the same thing.

‘What the hell is that bastard doing?’

“I, King Roath of the Vladi Kingdom, wholeheartedly support the establishment of the Beyond the Heavens Empire.”

“...”

“...”

“Is there anything that I and my kingdom can do to be of help to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?”

“...”

“...”

The other kings, the commentators, and the viewers watching the broadcast from all over the world, looked at King Roath incredulously. Even if he was considered shameless, Roath would always prioritize his kingdom.

The Vladi Kingdom might be considered the most powerful kingdom on the continent, but its position and influence were being reduced by the day. In fact, he had seen the prospects of the Luvien Empire and thought that he had to do what he did to gain benefits for himself and his kingdom.

But now, King Roath had finally seen the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s potential. If the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom truly succeeded in becoming an empire that could rival and fight against the Luvien Empire, King Roath believed that they would not forget the Vladi Kingdom, which helped establish the foundations of their empire. Even if his pride and dignity took a hit for shamelessly changing his words, he might still be able to gain more benefits.

However, the other kings stood still.

‘It doesn’t mean that it will be a good thing just because the Great Demon is in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.’

‘Since the Great Demon is in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, there must be quite a significant number of people that are reluctant to go there.’

‘Does he think that this will immediately open up a possibility for the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to become an empire?’

But then, at that moment, they saw around 200,000 people of unknown origins approach the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. All of the kings and their troops grew nervous and vigilant. They thought, ‘Which kingdom sent another troop?’

However, they had not heard about another kingdom joining them like that. On top of that, these people were not staring at the kings and their troops but at Minhyuk, who was standing on the walls behind them.

“Your Majesty Minhyuk, we have finally arrived.”

“Forgive us for being late.”

“Noble, you have our heartfelt gratitude!”

“We’re very grateful to you!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaah!”

“This is the place where we will live from now on, right?”

“I wonder if we’ll be able to live well in this place?”

“Is that even important? Just becoming the subject of His Majesty Minhyuk is worthy of celebration, no?”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

As it turned out, the more than 200,000 people who appeared were the residents of Happy Island. They were about to establish their new homes in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and would be of tremendous help to the growth and development of the kingdom.

‘N, no. How the hell were they able to get this many migrants?’

‘How can this be...’

An ordinary kingdom would usually have only around thirty migrants per day. This was because most people would not want to leave the places where they had lived. But 200,000 people at one go?

Meanwhile, the residents of Happy Island were quick-witted. They had already grasped the situation. Knight Commander Korro turned to look at Evelyn and, with his loudest voice, said, “Evelyn!!! How about paying back His Majesty Minhyuk’s grace by using your special power?!”

Of course, Evelyn answered back in a jolly manner, “Aha! Are you talking about my power that will allow those who will eat the dishes that I made grow faster permanently?”

She looked around and continued loudly, as if she wanted them to clearly hear her words, “But I will only use my S. P. E. C. I. A. L. ability for the people of Beyond. The. Heavens. If they aren’t residents of Beyond the Heavens, then I will absolutely. Not. Serve them!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The kings and the viewers that heard those words were left stunned.

[Did she just say what I think she said?]

[Basically, what that NPC said is that she can permanently increase one's EXP Acquisition Rate permanently with her dishes.]

[Unbelievable. I can't believe that an NPC with such a unique ability exists.]

[Even if there's only a 2%~5% increase in EXP Acquisition Rate, there will definitely be many people that will come to see her.]

[However, the most important thing to note in what she said is the fact that she will only serve her dishes to the residents of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

“...”

“...”

The kings' brains rolled for a brief moment. Then, King Fernon rushed to join King Roath and shouted, “Congratulations! Congratulations!!! You will definitely become the ruler of an empire! I have believed it for a very long time!!!”

Then, another king rushed forward. “I can allow your 200,000 new residents to stay in Arvatto Kingdom temporarily until they have fully settled in your kingdom!”

“Hahahahaha! I have believed in you for a very long time?!”

“Isn't it the same for King Roath? Of course, I think the same. Hahahahaha!!!”

“Ha, hahahahahahahahaha!”

The soldiers could only laugh awkwardly when they heard their kings laugh like that.

Then, Minhyuk looked at the kings and the soldiers with a small smile on his face. He said, “Kings of the Asgan Continent.”

“Please feel free to speak your mind.”

“How long are you going to let us wait outside like this? Huh? Please treat us to a cup of tea.”

“I also want to try the food that you make.”

“I'll only say this once, so you all better listen carefully.”

All of the kings perked their ears up and listened carefully. It went without saying that the rest of the world was equally curious. Minhyuk, with a faint smile on his face, opened his mouth and said, “Everyone...”

The kings gulped dryly as the cameras from all over the world zoomed in on Minhyuk's face. The smile on Minhyuk's face grew wide as he finished his words, “...you're all m*therf*ckers.”

What kind of existences were kings in Athenae? They were beings that could spare or kill thousands of people with just a wave of their hands.

‘Summon the army!’

They were also beings that could command an army of 200,000 with a single order.

To the ordinary players, kings were absolute beings. Even though there were emperors and empresses of empires that ranked higher than the kings, for most players, even the kings were in a position that was beyond their reach.

Right now, Minhyuk had spoken bluntly to such existences, saying, “You’re all m*therf*ckers.”

“Hahaha. this king is a m... huh?”

The first one to react was King Roath, who realized that something was wrong. Soon, the laughter from the other kings gradually died down, and their expressions turned ugly. Although they had changed their tune, their pride taking a huge blow, they were still kings. Yet here they were, openly ridiculed by another king.

“Aren’t your words too much?!” King Roath growled, the fawning look on his face gone.

These kings only had two options now. They had to choose the Luvien Empire or the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. In a situation like this, they thought that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would welcome them with open arms, since they were showing favor toward him and his kingdom.

‘It’s true that we made a fuss earlier, but can’t he understand the position that he’s in?’

The other kings acknowledged the fact that they had kicked up a fuss earlier. However, the establishment of their empire was not yet a done deal. There was only a possibility of this happening. Yet, Minhyuk was already acting arrogantly in such a manner toward them.

“Apologize. This king feels very uncomfortable,” Roath said, looking at the other kings with a grim look on his face. “We can start a war right away.”

King Roath expressed how angry he was through the open threat. The other kings nodded in agreement.

Minhyuk opened his mouth and retorted, “F*ck you. Just now, you were shouting that I can’t build an empire and clamoring for me to bow my head and apologize to the Luvien Empire. And then, what?”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“Weren’t these the words that came out of your mouths earlier, You can’t build an empire. Go and apologize to Nerva.”

The kings could not open their mouths. After all, this was the truth.

“However, after Elpis, who boosted my power, and the new migrants appeared and opened up the possibility of an empire being built, what did you f*ckers do?”

Their attitudes had made a complete 180.

-We believed in you!

-You can definitely build an empire! We will help you!

-So, don't forget us later!

Minhyuk was fully aware of the situation. After calming down, he gave them a long look and said, “If you ran to the Luvien Empire and flattered Nerva, what do you think will happen?”

“...”

“...”

“...”

They continued to keep their mouths shut. Yes, if they had gone to the Luvien Empire, Nerva would never throw them away. However, the Asgan Continent, led by the Eivelis Empire, had clearly stopped the invasion of the Luvien Empire.

“Using various reasons, they would nibble your position bit by bit. In the end, they will make your heads roll and take away your vast lands.”

There was truth in Minhyuk's words. In the first place, there would be no reason to harass Beyond the Heavens if the kings had already established friendly relations with the Luvien Empire. If they were truly friendly with the empire, they would have just bowed to Nerva and begged them to take them in.

However, this was the Asgan Continent, which was fully in the hands of the Eivelis and the Collodis Empires. In fact, these kings were only able to survive without being deprived of their territories because of the two Empires.

The main reason why they came here to appeal was so they could prolong the time before the Luvien Empire invaded these lands. However, they saw a possible lifeline in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom as well.

They thought that perhaps they could hide behind the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in the future. On top of that, if Beyond the Heavens became an empire, they might be able to gain a lot of benefits.

‘It's true that the only nation that can stop the Luvien Empire as of the moment is the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.’

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom housed Brod, the Spear God, the God of Swords Luo, the God of Snakes Elizabeth, Great Demon Elpis and many more. One could not win a war just because they had an advantage in numbers.

“Weren't you trying to lean and depend on me because you saw our potential?”

If Minhyuk and these kings had a fallout, then these kingdoms would probably have no other choice but to wring their hands and wait for their destruction. The kings' dark faces turned beet red.

"What you want to do is to keep your pride and also to do as little help as possible but reap the most benefits."

Those words made the kings unable to raise their heads.

"Then, later you will shout and declare, 'I took the lead and helped in the foundation of the Beyond the Heavens Empire.' Isn't that the case?"

The kings remained mute. Then, King Baroque said, "You're a crazy king. We will return!"

"I also can't listen to the words of a mad king. Come, we shall return!"

Three kings left. From what it looked like, they were going to beg Ellie and try to grab onto her ankles. However, King Roath and King O'Lough remained standing in front of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Those words were true. Regardless, these two kings knew that their survival needed to come first before anything else.

Then, Minhyuk, with his majestic and dignified voice, said, "I will become the Battle God."

"..."

The power and the impact of those words were tremendous. Only after seeing this were the commentators able to grasp the situation.

[Amazing. It seems like Player Minhyuk does not want a relationship based on cooperation and alliance but one based on 'subservience and obedience'.]

[My goodness. He has the charisma that can overwhelm those kings. I feel like he will truly become the Battle God.]

That was right. Minhyuk did not want an alliance. He wanted them to become vassals and for them to be obedient. That was why he went so hard on them like that.

"First." Roath opened his mouth. "I apologize for the disrespectful behavior that I showed you earlier."

Roath knew that he had acted in a way that could cause others to question his qualifications as a king. However, these actions were motivated by the safety of his people. He also knew that the kings who left this place would regret the choice that they had made. Because of their pride, it would be very hard for their people to set foot in the Eivelis Empire and the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, let alone the Luvien Empire.

"What do you want?"

In fact, Minhyuk had already expected that King Roath and King O'Lough would remain.

"Give me Vladi Kingdom's Avarrin Territory."

"...!" Roath's eyes grew wide.

As mentioned before, the Vladi Kingdom was the largest kingdom on the Asgan Continent. They also held the largest and widest territory. In fact, it was only just recently that they were able to transform the dried lands of the Avarrin Territory into a 'fertile' land. Roath had been trying to cultivate this land to make it into a new home for his people.

"Wh, what... that..."

"We need a place for our migrants and those who will come to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in the future to call home."

He might not have lifted the knife, but it was still no different from a robbery. But then, Minhyuk said, "We will let bygones be bygones. I will not forget the Vladi Kingdom after this."

"..."

Minhyuk added, "What do you think will happen to those kingdoms that left this place?"

Minhyuk had the justification. The offending kings came here and raised their voices to go against the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. They would either have one of the two outcomes. They would either get devoured by Luvien or by Minhyuk. Among the two, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had a greater advantage when it came to absorbing them. After all, they all belong to the Asgan Continent.

King Roath hesitated. Avarrin Territory was a territory that bordered the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. In other words, it was very, very close to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. It would definitely be very helpful for the Vladi Kingdom to form a friendly relationship with the kingdom. The problem was that the Avarrin Territory was worth hundreds of thousands of platinum. It was a sum of money that no ordinary player could dream of touching.

After a brief moment of hesitation, King Roath said, "I will give the Avarrin Territory to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom."

[Vladi Kingdom's King Roath has promised to hand over the ownership of the Avarrin Territory!]

[Avarrin Territory was originally a dry and barren land. However, King Roath, with the help of special farmers and builders, was able to transform it into a fertile land!]

[Avarrin Territory is a huge land that can accommodate 400,000 people!]

The corners of Minhyuk's lips curled up into a smile.

Meanwhile, King O'Lough was very tense. His kingdom was an excellent 'production fortress.' They had countless blacksmiths, seamstresses and merchants. Even though the size of their kingdom was small, their financial power could rival that of the Vladi Kingdom.

"We need weapons and armor, as well as equipment that will help us provide both protection and home to my people."

"...Giving you 100,000 platinum is sufficient, right?" King O'Lough made the first move.

However, Minhyuk did not answer and just gave him a smile. He just stared at King O'Lough with that soft and gentle smile for twenty straight seconds.

The viewers, who were watching, groaned in exasperation.

[Look at that smile. We can already tell what it means.]

[Who does he think he's offering a mere 100,000 platinum to?]

"A... a hundred and fifty thousand...?"

Minhyuk just continued to look at him, the smile on his lips stretching even wider.

[Hey, hey. He might not lift the knife, but this is no different from robbery, no?]

[A hundred and fifty thousand platinum is a huge amount of money. In fact, taking out that amount of money is enough to shake a kingdom's finances.]

"A hundred and seventy thousand...?"

"Let's settle it at two hundred thousand."

"..."

King O'Lough felt strange. 'No. I'm the one that's offering it to you, so why do I feel like I'm being ripped off?'

It was a very subtle yet strange feeling, especially since Minhyuk was obviously smiling.

"I, I understand."

[Lake Kingdom's King O'Lough promises to send you 200,000 platinum.]

Minhyuk looked at the two kings before speaking briefly and bluntly, "Thanks."

"..."

"..."

The kings could not shake off the feeling that they had been ripped off. Then, Minhyuk approached them and personally handed each of them an unknown bottle.

"These are coffee beans that Spear God Ben grew himself. I'll give you some to express my gratitude."

"Th, thank you."

"I'll drink it well."

The kings, who were holding a bottle of coffee beans made from cat poop, left in a daze. These beans were bought with a territory that was worth hundreds of thousands of platinum and 200,000 platinum of cold hard cash.

"..."

"..."

The two kings scrunched their noses as they continued on their way. At the same time, they could not help but be impressed.

'He was able to overwhelm us with just a few words.'

‘He was able to get a huge territory and 200,000 platinum just like that.’

They were sure that he would go on to greater heights.

BJ Correspondent was a bigshot that ranked third in the global Ztube rankings. He had a lot of fans all over the globe, and his earnings could easily exceed a hundred million.

Right now, he was in Evelyn’s Gogi-guksu restaurant, temporarily created by King Minhyuk for the woman named Evelyn.

Minhyuk had personally sent an invitation to Correspondent.

[Please spread the news in your broadcast that we will only serve twenty people the EXP Acquisition Rate Booster Dish.]

People who wanted to advertise through high-ranking BJs were rare and far too few. However, as a BJ himself, BJ Correspondent knew that those ads were usually exaggerated. Even so, he was a professional, and was willing to tell people what they were most curious about in Athenae.

His viewers were constantly posting comments on his broadcast.

[Are we finally going to be able to see the dish of that woman named Evelyn that can permanently increase one’s EXP Acquisition Rate?]

[How many do you think they will be able to acquire?]

[0.9%?]

[I think it’s more like 0.4%?]

What the viewers were guessing was very reasonable. It would already be great if they could eat a dish and permanently increase their EXP Acquisition Rate, even if it was just by 1% at most.

‘Are they going to increase the number of their high rankers through this?’

Correspondent smiled bitterly. Of course, obtaining a permanent 1% increase in EXP Acquisition Rate was a sweet deal. However, for those who were still on the fence and were still mulling over whether they would go to the Luvien Empire or the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, a 1% increase was not enough to sway them to go to Beyond the Heavens.

‘Well, it doesn’t matter to me. I just came here to get an issue. If I can get a 2% increase, then it would already be amazing.’

The viewers were expecting at most 1%. but Correspondent thought that he would get 2%. A permanent increase would definitely help him level up and would have huge effects on him in the long run.

‘If they can increase it by 2% then it will be enough to make the heads of those high rankers turn and pay attention to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.’

Correspondent smiled when he saw the gogi-guksu served in front of him. Then, he asked Evelyn, “His Majesty Minhyuk said that you would only cook for twenty people. Is there a reason for that?”

“His Majesty let me taste a dish not too long ago. After eating that dish, I felt like I grew more energetic and that my power had increased a bit. Maybe it’s because of that?”

Correspondent was a quick-witted person.

“Everyone, I believe Minhyuk has fed Evelyn a buffed dish to increase the percent of the EXP Acquisition Rate that she could give. To everyone watching my broadcast, they will only serve twenty rankers. This is on a first-come, first-served basis. How about coming to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom quickly? Haha!” Correspondent said, a smile on his face.

Since there was a buff effect added, he could really expect a 2% increase now. Without waiting any further, he quickly started eating.

Correspondent tasted the soup of the gogi-guksu first.

“...”

He was surprised. The soup tasted a bit like the soup of Japanese ramen, but it was thicker. In fact, he felt like it was better than the gogi-guksu that he had tasted on Jeju Island. Then, he took a huge bite of the noodles as he continued to admire the flavor of the soup.

“Sluuuuuuuuuuuurp!”

The noodles were very chewy. He could not stop his chopsticks from moving. Not long after, he grabbed the entire bowl and drank the soup.

“Wow. That’s really amazing.”

Correspondent was in awe and admiration. He had eaten in such a hurry that he almost forgot he was doing a broadcast. Before finishing the rest of the soup, he said, “I wonder how much my EXP Acquisition Rate will increase from the dish that Lady Evelyn, whom Minhyuk is very proud of?”

[Shit. Just finish eating quickly.]

[Hurry and eat!]

[Eat, so we can see the % increase.]

A BJ’s notification window could be shared with their viewers during their broadcast. However, as cheeky as he was, Correspondent turned off the sharing function. This was so he could build the tension.

‘Please! Just increase by 2%!!!’

Correspondent, who prayed desperately, was left speechless after seeing the notification that popped up in his notification window.

[Why? What % did you get?]

[Hey, let us look at it...?]

[I’m going crazy here!]

[Look at Correspondent's expression. He's obviously trying to keep us in suspense.]

Correspondent finally took a breath after staring blankly at his notification window in a daze, "Keheooook!"

He was so surprised that he almost fell from his chair. At this point, the viewers' anticipation and expectations had reached an all-time high.

Meanwhile, BJ Correspondent was still sporting a look of disbelief on his face as he said, "To, to all of the rankers watching this broadcast, I would like to inform you... Please, please run to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom now. Now that I have eaten one bowl, there are only nineteen bowls left."

[Run? What do you mean by run? That's too much. Haha.]

[Correspondent, hurry and share the screen!]

[What the hell is the %?!]

Correspondent did not dally anymore. He clicked on the 'Share with Your Viewers' button and shared the notification window that popped up in front of him with his viewers.

[You have eaten the Gogi-guksu made by God's Hand Evelyn.]

[Evelyn is a Special NPC that can make dishes that can permanently increase the EXP Acquisition Rate.]

[Your EXP Acquisition Rate has permanently increased by 8%.]

Silence. The chatting window in the broadcasting channel was completely silent.

[...]

[...]

[...]

[...]

Then, one of the viewers typed a message.

[I think the high rankers must be running like crazy now, right...?]

Chapter 783

The entire Athenae community was turned upside down after the video posted by the world-renowned BJ Correspondent was released.

[That's freaking crazy. He only ate a dish, and his EXP Acquisition Rate increased by 8%?]

[It's permanent?]

[Wow... That's f*cking crazy, right?]

[What the hell? Isn't this complete nonsense...?]

There was only a very slight difference between most high rankers. And yet, this slight difference was what determined their rankings. It was also because of this that they had to often wear a 'Growth Ring' or a 'God's Blessing's Ring', items that were extremely valuable and could increase

one's EXP Acquisition Rate permanently by 3%. It went without saying that the item had to be equipped for the effect to manifest.

However, the dish made by God's Hand Evelyn was something that did not require any equipping. In other words, they did not need to take up another precious ring slot because they only needed to eat in order to increase their EXP Acquisition Rate.

[There are 2,031 Level 300 players and above applying to migrate to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[There are 433 Level 400 players and above applying to migrate to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[There are 31 Level 500 players and above applying to migrate to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

Soon, there was a huge influx of applications for migration.

'As expected of His Majesty. He has his ways,' Haze thought as she looked at Evelyn's crowded gogi-guksu restaurant.

Minhyuk had used the 'Create a Recipe' skill on Evelyn and was lucky enough to produce a legendary-grade dish that increased Evelyn's 'God's Loving Touch' skill level by +3. The effects of the buffed dish would last for an entire week. Even so, Beyond the Heavens still limited the number of people to 20.

'This is so those foreign talents will not have any time to consider and think things through.'

True, there might be many talents who would want to take advantage of the situation. However, what if they heard that it was limited to twenty people? Then, they would have no choice but to rush to be a part of that quota, despite still being conflicted over choosing between the Luvien Empire and the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Actually, it was fine if they could not be a part of the twenty that could get the 8% permanent increase in EXP Acquisition Rate. Since the effect was already proven, those who failed to grab a slot believed that they would also be able to get that benefit someday.

'Those twenty people will have to pay at least 100,000 platinum each through Evelyn's quest.'

It did not matter if it was an ingredient or money; they had to pay that much. Evelyn's dish was worthy of such a price. All Evelyn had to do was cook.

'How in the world did His Majesty bring such a person here?'

Haze could see Evelyn's astronomical worth. In fact, Minhyuk had said this to her.

—We need to get as many people as possible before they can finish the patch for Evelyn.

Patch was a part of the foreigners' lingo. Based on what Haze understood, it was like God Athenae was putting a sanction to weaken some of Evelyn's power.

Looking at the other side, Haze could see another crowd of people gathered. And the place where they were gathered was where Great Demon Elpis was.

[A new Great Demon has awakened to the world.]

[The newly awakened Great Demon can change your race to Demon.]

[You can only change your race to Demon if you are Level 500 or higher.]

[You can only change your race to Demon through the newly awakened Great Demon.]

These were the messages that rang in the ears of all of the players of Athenae the day Elpis descended as the new Great Demon. Many players were very excited and were looking forward to changing to a new race in Athenae.

On top of that, the demons were known to be beings born with stronger powers than humans. Battle Demons. That was what the demons were called.

This was the order that Elpis had received from Minhyuk.

—Elpis. Just live how you want to live. Do what you usually do. You're already reliable enough, but now that you have become the Great Demon, I feel more assured.

Elpis was much stronger than before. In fact, his level had increased by as much as 80 levels. However, in truth, Elpis was still a 'Probationary Great Demon.' He was not yet at a level to completely finish Gorac's trial. It was only thanks to Minhyuk's help, as well as his own hard work and effort, that he was able to break through that system and became the Great Demon. Because of that, Elpis still had to take things step by step until he became a 'True Great Demon.'

Right now, there was a huge crowd gathered around Elpis. Many people came to visit the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to meet Elpis. However, they were unable to even utter a word in front of the demon. The title 'Great Demon' was already enough to make them feel numb all over. They could not even approach Elpis, who was sitting silently with his earphones plugged into his ears.

'Ugh... So, scary.'

'What kind of gaze is that...'

'Just looking at him is giving me goosebumps.'

'Is this the dignity and majesty of the Great Demon?'

Right at that moment, something happened.

"Yo, Elpis! Did you eat already?" An ordinary farmer, who was passing by, waved his hands and called out to the Great Demon. He was an ordinary resident of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

The onlookers watched Elpis wave back at the man with a small smile on his face and say, "Elpis... has eaten. Old man Halsen, stay healthy!"

"..."

“...”

“...”

The people were astonished. He, an object of fear to the people who were not a part of the kingdom, was smiling faintly and even wishing the ordinary resident of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom good health!

Seeing this, one of the players mustered the courage and approached him. He said, “Elpis, have you eat...”

“...”

However, Elpis just looked at him nonchalantly.

[The Great Demon’s Killing Intent has affected you. Your breathing has been constricted.]

[It is a power that you cannot resist.]

“Keheok...?!”

The player that spoke up looked like he was suffocating. The next moment, the children of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom appeared and came running toward Elpis with their swords.

“Hiyaa! Take this! I am the Hero Vagan, Great Demon!”

Then, the children swung their thin branches at Elpis.

‘Are those brats crazy?’

‘Hiiiik! Their limbs will be cut off!’

Everyone thought that a terrible tragedy would unfold in front of them. However, Elpis pretended to clutch his heart and said, “Urk. Hero, your sword is too... strong...”

Thud.

“...”

“...”

“...”

The players were left speechless when they saw Elpis pretend to fall down. Then, after playing with them, Elpis stood up and rubbed the children’s heads.

The players thought that the best way to change their race to Demon was to increase their favorability with Elpis. Now, they realized that the first step in increasing their favor with the Great Demon was to become a resident of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. These people quickly moved to apply for migration to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

[There are 32 players applying to migrate to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

Those that applied for migration and were accepted, finally received a quest from Elpis.

[Demon Race Change Quest: The Great Demon’s Atrocious Envoy.]

Rank: S

Requirements: Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's Player, Level 500 or above.

Rewards: Successful change to the Demon race.

Penalty for Failure: You will no longer be able to change your race to the Demon race.

Description: Meet the Great Demon's Envoy in the 'Evil One's Dungeon' located not too far from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and fulfill his orders.

"...!"

"...!"

The players could not help but tremble in fear.

'As expected.'

'I knew it; it won't be easy to change one's race to Demon.'

'The Great Demon's Atrocious Envoy...?'

Despite their shock, they could only take a step forward to change their race after meeting the Great Demon's Atrocious Envoy and fulfilling his orders. The mere thought was enough to make them feel numb all over. Great Demon Elpis lived in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. From what they saw, he showed great favor toward the people of his kingdom. However, all of the demons were beings that killed humans so easily, treating their lives as if they were mere bugs.

'What if the Great Demon's Atrocious Envoy is such a being?'

However, to become a Demon, they had no choice but to take a step forward and fulfill the quest.

—You should listen to that 'guy' to the best of your abilities. He's someone that cares for the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom more than anybody else.

Minhyuk had mentioned a particular person who cared for and helped the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom a lot. That guy came to Asura Ascar, King of the Dead Death, and Golden Mage Ali and asked them a favor, although his mannerisms made it more of an order.

This was because that guy was very ferocious and terrifying, and these three important figures were forced to stay in this dungeon together. The three could only sigh.

"We only have to do it once... well..."

"It's better to do that 'guy' a favor than let him get angry and show us how ferocious he is."

"Haaaa..."

The three, who were considered to be one of the strongest high rankers of the world, could only grit their shaking teeth at the thought of that 'guy.'

[You have entered the Evil One's Dungeon.]

[This dungeon is owned by the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[Only Level 500 or above can enter the dungeon.]

There were a total of ten people who entered the dungeon to change their race to Demon. According to the data posted on the official Athenae home page, it was very difficult to convert to the Demon race.

“From what I heard, the Demon race should be the last race that we can convert into. However, Joy Co. Ltd. was forced to release the race quickly after Elpis became the Great Demon.”

“Yeah. Originally, the Elf, Orc and many other races should be the ones released first.”

“I think that’s the reason why only those with Level 500 or higher can change their race.”

It was just like what they said. The demons were a race of battle maniacs. That was why everyone was aware that they would be able to gain a stronger power if they could succeed in changing their race. However, there was no way that Athenae would allow them to do it so easily.

Reagan, one of the ten players that entered the dungeon, was a player that had lived in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom for a very long time now. He had a dream.

‘I also want to become as strong as Emperor of the Swords Carr, King of the Dead Death and Asura Ascar. I also want to be one of the powerhouses of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.’

Even though Reagan had been a resident of the kingdom for a long time, it was only natural that he had to take the same quests as everyone else.

“Let’s go inside.”

They all turned nervous as they entered the dungeon.

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

At that moment, countless explosion magic was triggered and swept away the area where they were. But that was not the end.

“H, Hell Warrior?!”

Even high-leveled monsters like the Hell Warrior had made an appearance. At this point, they realized that changing their race to Demon was even more difficult than they had imagined.

However, Reagan still stepped inside and fought a bloody battle alongside the rest of the players. He thought, ‘I will definitely meet the Atrocious Envoy.’

The thought of meeting such a being made Reagan feel some fear, that even his vision would start to shake. However, he pushed through. He gave it his all and led the charge toward the depths of his dungeon. He wanted to achieve his dreams.

When they reached the halfway point, half of the players that entered the dungeon had already been forced to log out.

“Haa... Haa... How about going back?”

“The level is too high for us.”

Even the people of the kingdom that owned the dungeon would be subject to penalties once they were forced to log out. They thought that it was not worth the risk at this point.

However, Reagan shook his head. “I won’t leave.”

“I will log out.”

“Me too.”

In the end, two of the surviving players left. After that, Reagan continued to break through the dungeon with the remaining players. Thankfully, Reagan was a bit of a talent himself and was able to reach the end of the dungeon and overcome the enemies. Unfortunately, the only one that was able to survive the process was Reagan alone. He could only gulp dryly as he recalled the terrible and hideous image of the ferocious devil.

As he walked toward the end of the dungeon, he heard the roars of a beast from the pitch-black darkness that awaited him.

“Graaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Roaaaaaaaaaaaar!”

“Grrrrrrrrrrrrr!”

Reagan almost shriveled and curled in on himself when he heard the roar.

[You have entered the Atrocious Envoy’s room.]

[The servants of the Atrocious Envoy have appeared!]

Reagan could see the silhouette of the servants through the darkness. Two of the unrecognizable silhouettes were holding staves, while the other one was holding a huge greatsword. And finally, the notification came.

[The Atrocious Envoy has appeared!]

The Atrocious Envoy riding on top of a gigantic beast has made his appearance. With his appearance, light slowly appeared in the dark dungeon and illuminated the entire area, allowing Reagan to see their true figures.

The Atrocious Envoy sitting on top of the gigantic beast was wearing a black cape on his back and had two large horns on his head. He also had a bloody red sword in his hands.

Then, the three servants of the Atrocious Envoy began to speak.

“Fufufu. You, who have come this far to become a member of a new race, bow down before the Great One.”

Reagan, who heard the voice, could not help but tilt his head in confusion.

‘Huh? I think I heard that voice somewhere before?’

Once the surroundings were completely illuminated by the light, Reagan was finally able to see clearly.

“Oink, oink oink oink, oink oink oink, (The One that wants to seize the evil power.)”

The baby piggy Beanie, who was wearing a huge horned helmet and a black cape from who knew where showed a vicious smile. This was the appearance of the ‘Demon Lord’ Beanie!

As for the beast that he was riding on, it was none other than Love, Hope, and Happiness.

‘Demon Lord’ Beanie cried, “Oink, oink oink oink, oink oink. (Do you want to obtain the dark and evil power, oink?!)”

Reagan’s gaze turned to look at the three, whose figures had completely appeared after the light shone on them. Each of them wore huge horned helmets on their heads and black capes on their backs.

‘My idols...’

They were none other than Golden Mage Ali, Asura Ascar, and King of the Dead Death.

The three trembled when they saw Beanie winking at them. Then, they hurriedly opened their mouths.

“Fufu. Congratulations on reaching this place.”

“We will now give you the right to become a member of the new race.”

“However, you have to pay the price. You have to bring at least an ‘epic’ grade ingredient that the devil wants.”

“Fufufufufu.”

“Kekekekekeke.”

“Keuhahahahaha!”

Reagan felt his heart break as he watched them laugh unnaturally like that.

‘My idols...’

Every single one of them was under the thumb of Beanie, the ‘greatest and cruelest being’ who would turn everything upside down once he became angry.

At this moment, Reagan realized that if Minhyuk was the number one in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, then the one sitting in the number two position was none other than Beanie.

Drip, drip, drip—

Reagan cried. So did Ascar, Ali and Death.

Chapter 784

A world message rang for all of the players in the world.

[The first player to convert their race to Demon has been born.]

Reagan, who gained the honor of becoming the first demon among the players, posted this on the Athenae official homepage. Of course, he posted this after obtaining the approval of King Minhyuk.

[You have changed your race to Demon.]

[Your previous class was 'Knight.']

[Your class will now change from 'Knight' to 'Demon Knight.']

[All of your attack has increased by 17%. Your INT and WIS stats have increased by 20%.]

[Your attack and movement speed have increased by 20%. Your skill cooldown has decreased by 20%.]

[The skills that you possessed as a knight will now be changed to the Demon Knight's skills. Your skills have become stronger.]

[Your recovery and buff skills have been deleted.]

[You have gained 100 Demonic Energy stats.]

[Your level has decreased by -50.]

[You have turned into a demon through Great Demon Elpis.]

[You have become Great Demon Elpis' subordinate. You are now the first Demon Knight.]

All of the players were amazed to see the benefits that they would obtain if they changed their race to demon.

[As expected of a battle race... just look at that 17% increase in all of your attack... there's even a 20% increase in movement speed...]

[It seems like the Demon race does not rely on skills.]

[However, from what it looks like, the benefits that you can get are worth it. Just the fact that one can increase their attack speed by 20% compared to other players of the same level...]

[What a pity. Why is it that only players at Level 500 or higher can change their race?]

[If you look at Reagan's skills, you can tell that his skills have become a lot cooler and stronger.]

There were certainly huge benefits and merits in changing one's race to Demon. However, many players expressed their dissatisfaction. After all, only players at Level 500 or above could change their race. But there was one thing that they were sure of.

[Because the demons changed their race through Great Demon Elpis, they must consider him as an object of worship.]

[Then, that means...]

[That means that the master of the demons is the vassal of our Lord the Food God...?]

[...]

The players could only sit in silence, jealous of the fact that Minhyuk had become the grand master of all of the demons.

Bran, the second in the global explorer rankings, was a holder of the 'Explorer' class. He explored unknown lands and ancient dungeons, while searching for special artifacts, surprising cooking ingredients, and many more. Explorer Bran was a talent that was sought after by forces from all over the world. One of the main forces that sought him for his talent was the Luvien Empire.

The Luvien Empire wanted Explorer Bran. In fact, they already had Ian, the current global number one explorer. If they added Bran to their list of talents, then they would be able to hoard a huge amount of information regarding ancient items, and even legendary and god-rank artifacts. They would then be able to monopolize all kinds of dungeons and hunting grounds.

However, Bran refused their offer. As a result, the Luvien Empire began to openly pressure him, keeping him in check. He was often chased by someone, and his search for a dungeon had been interrupted several times.

Right now, the Luvien Empire almost had all of 100 of the world's most famous explorers in their hands. Because of that, Bran was being forced to become a lone wolf.

At this point, Bran suddenly found a way to grow faster.

'Whenever explorers level up, they will be able to get enlightened and receive a new skill that will help us find new dungeons.'

This was also the reason why the explorers were all eager to level up. Of course, most of the EXP that they acquired came from finding something new. So, what method did Bran find to grow faster? It was none other than 'Evelyn's Dish.'

Bran rejected Luvien's proposal and immediately moved to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to eat Evelyn's dish.

"All of the dishes for the twenty people have been served."

"..."

Unfortunately, the high rankers had rushed to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom as soon as they heard the news. There was no time for them to check whether there were any of the dishes left. Many of them went there and applied for migration. One of them was Bran.

A permanent 8% increase in EXP Acquisition Rate. That was a huge benefit. Bran was very frustrated at the fact that he lost out on this benefit. That was when he thought, 'Wouldn't it be solved if I just met with Minhyuk?'

That was right. If he met Minhyuk, then everything would be solved. He was the only person with the power to change the limit from twenty to any number he wanted. However, there was no way that he would willingly give preferential treatment without any price.

'If I gave him the information about that place then...'

Bran immediately made a move.

Bran did not actually migrate because there was something special about the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. He migrated purely because of his conditions.

Using the name 'Dungeon Explorer', Bran was able to meet countless kings and emperors. Every single one of them had treated Bran as a tool. Their usual scenario always went like, 'I'll give you money, so find a dungeon for me. Or, I'll give you something, so dig up an ancient ruin for me. It always happened without fail. Because of that, Bran thought that Minhyuk would be no different.

When he actually met Minhyuk in person, he was greeted with a soft and warm smile.

"Your reputation precedes you, Bran."

"Thank you for the compliment."

Although this was a virtual reality game, Bran still showed courtesy when he greeted Minhyuk. He knelt on one knee, looked up at Minhyuk, who was sitting on his throne, and said, "I have asked for an audience with Your Majesty because I have some useful information to offer you."

"Useful information?" Minhyuk asked, intrigued. He knew that any information that came from the global number two explorer, Bran, would definitely be huge.

So, Bran began to tell his story. According to Bran, he had a special skill that even Dungeon Explorer Ian did not have. That skill was none other than the 'Ancient Relic Tracker' skill, one that he could only use once every five months. From what he said, the skill allowed him a minute to look at where the relic was and view its information.

"That's an amazing ability."

"Yes, it's thanks to this ability that I was able to come this far. When I used that skill recently, the place that I was able to see for a minute was none other than the 'Tomb of the Kings.'"

"...Tomb of the Kings?"

"Yes. The Tomb of the Kings has been standing for a very long time, and it is the place where all of the kings that once existed were laid to rest."

It was a tomb for all of the kings that had ever existed. It was both a strange and interesting story.

"However, the most important thing about the place is that it contains a lot of rewards. It has the 'Legendary Cavalry' of the Locae Kingdom, a kingdom known to have the most excellent cavalry. It has the 'Blacksmiths' Legacy' from the Avon Nation, a kingdom that was hailed as the Kingdom of Blacksmiths. It also has 'Abannon's Mages' Relics' from the Kingdom of Magic..."

"Wait. Wait up," Minhyuk interrupted as he took a deep breath.

Bran smiled deep inside. 'Right, that's right.'

All of the kings and emperors that he met acted the same way. Whenever he said that he found something, they would all grow excited, and their faces would be filled with desire. It would also be the same for the man in front of him. No one could resist the desire to obtain rare and important artifacts. He believed Minhyuk would also turn out to be a hypocrite that would make a huge fuss about him, but eventually only end up talking about his own benefits and profits.

On top of that, the Tomb of the Kings could help with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's quest to establish an empire. Bran expected Minhyuk to sport a greedy look on his face while saying, 'Then, are you telling me that I can get my hands on all of that?'

However, Minhyuk said something completely different from what Bran expected.

"Then, does that mean..."

"Feel free to ask me."

"There must be a lot of delicious things in there!!!"

'Eh?'

Bran looked at Minhyuk weirdly. This was because Minhyuk had been exuding a king's dignity and majesty earlier, but was now shining brightly like an innocent child.

"Hiyaa. Since that place has the most outstanding cavalry and even the relics of a Magic Kingdom, then that means that there should be a banquet from a kingdom with the most delicious dishes, right?!!!"

Bran unknowingly felt at ease when he saw the smile on Minhyuk's face. He did not even feel like he was talking to a king. He felt like he was talking to a friend that he had met a few times.

"That's... that's right. In fact, from what I recall when I was looking through the list of rewards, there's this thing called the 'Banquet Enjoyed by the Kings.'"

"...Oh my god," Minhyuk exclaimed as he stood up from his throne and strode to where Bran was, grabbing both of his hands with his own. "Thank you for this very useful information. Thank you."

The king in front of Bran was a friendly king, his bright smile was enough to put a smile to his own face. However, a small part of Bran still thought that the man in front of him was pretentious. The bright expression was probably just a facade. After all, he was a talent that anyone coveted.

"I know the way. I will guide you there, Your Majesty. However, you have to know that it's very dangerous."

"Alright," Minhyuk said as he looked at Bran gently. "What do you want in return, Bran?"

Everything had a price.

"I want to eat Lady Evelyn's dish."

"Hmm." Minhyuk nodded. He understood that the 8% permanent increase in EXP Acquisition Rate was enough to attract a talent like Bran. "That's not difficult. Alright. Then..."

Minhyuk's words turned into a mumble. Bran thought that it had finally come to this point. Now, Minhyuk would tell him to find plenty of dungeons and relics for the Beyond the Heavens

Kingdom. With those lips stained with greed, he would say, 'I will also make sure to take care of your share.'

However, the words that Minhyuk said were completely unexpected.

"...Thank you for joining us here in Beyond the Heavens."

"Eh? There's nothing else? You won't ask me to dedicate my body and soul to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom? Or find dungeons and relics for you?"

"Well, that's your choice, Bran. Aren't we playing this game because we want to have fun? I hope that you have a pleasant gaming experience in Athenae with our Beyond the Heavens Kingdom."

"..."

To Bran, Minhyuk was a very strange king. And because he was a very strange king doing unexpected things, Bran thought, 'Perhaps it's my greatest luck that I came to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?'

After the Rothschilde Kingdom declared that they would hunt Gaerna, one of the Six Monster Gods, they ended up staying by the sidelines while Minhyuk and the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom did the actual hunting.

As a result, many of the people of the kingdom migrated and left the Rothschilde Kingdom, which brought a crisis to those that they left behind. Thankfully, King Calauhel was able to find a solution and a way to overcome this crisis. He had paid a huge amount of money to a dungeon explorer and learned about the 'Tomb of the Kings.'

[Only those with the qualifications as a 'king' can enter the Tomb of the Kings!]

[You can lead your soldiers inside the Tomb of the Kings.]

[However, if you lead too many soldiers, the difficulty of the Tomb of the Kings will increase.]

[If the 'king' that challenges the Tomb of the Kings fails, the greedy kings will take away a lot from you.]

[They can take away a variety of things including stats, classes, gold, artifacts, skills and many more.]

[Would you like to challenge the Tomb of the Kings?]

Calauhel had no other choice. Several other kingdoms had already bared their fangs, threatening to tear apart the crumbling the Rothschilde Kingdom. Even the Luvien Empire was looking at them with drool dripping down their chins. In fact, no one would find it strange if the Rothschilde Kingdom collapsed at any moment.

The bigger problem here was the fact that the Luvien Empire would definitely issue an extermination order against Calauhel once the Rothschilde Kingdom fell.

'If that happens, then my life in Athenae will be over.'

Athenae was a very precious place for Calauhel, a rich young master who only knew about money. For someone like him, who had always been bored with life, the game brought him something new, something fun. The game also taught him that there would always be someone better than him.

Calauhel led 20,000 mercenaries, who he had a hard time gathering, and the 10,000 surviving elites of the Rothschilde Kingdom.

“I will challenge it.”

However, the price that he paid for this challenge was terrible.

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

“U, uwaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Keuaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

“Your, Your Majesty Calauhel! Please live long and healthy!”

“Keheooooook!”

Within just a few short minutes after entering the dungeon, more than half of their troops were lost.

Since Calauhel led a huge number of troops, the difficulty of the dungeon was increased.

Fortunately, it seemed like the difficulty of the dungeon was gradually decreasing as their numbers decreased.

However, the problem laid elsewhere. The moment they entered the depths of the Tomb of the Kings, a startling notification rang in their ears.

[The blessings of one of the Eight Pillars, Aegaeon, is protecting the Tomb of the Kings.]

“...”

Calauhel did not know. He truly did not know that the Tomb of the Kings was owned by one of the Eight Pillars. All he could do was to move forward despite the despair that was filling him. He could no longer escape or leave this place.

The further inside they went in, the stronger their opponents became. Their troops only had 500 surviving players, 700 NPCs, and around 200 mercenaries. The soldiers' moans and groans rang all over the place.

Calauhel had truly changed. He had learned about the importance of the NPCs during Gaerna's hunt.

‘Even here...’

Calauhel saw his soldiers shout, ‘Long live the Rothschilde Kingdom, long live His Majesty Calauhel!’ as they died one after another. Many of the soldiers, who came here with him, pleaded as they died, ‘Please don't lose your pride. Please don't give up.’

He felt bitter. Calauhel could tell that everyone here would be wiped out in an hour. How could he not lose his pride at this point? He felt like he was the most incompetent king in history.

‘I should just give up here and end my career in Athenae...’

Then, the mercenaries approached him and said, “We will definitely be forced to log out here. Please don’t forget our payment.”

The arrogant Calauhel just nodded, exhaustion evident in his face. At that moment, someone’s face flashed in his head.

‘I wonder what the situation will be like if it’s that guy and his comrades?’

It was none other than Food God Minhyuk. If it were him, then his comrades would say this to him:

‘Don’t worry. We can get past this.’

‘Let’s move forward, Minhyuk.’

‘We can do it.’

The high rankers and NPCs that lived in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom and surrounded Minhyuk did not go there because they were enticed by material things. It was because they liked Minhyuk. They were in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom because they really, really liked Minhyuk. That fact made Calauhel envy him.

‘I really envy you,’ Calauhel thought.

Calauhel was the richest man in the world, yet he was standing here, envious of another man.

“Kghhk...”

“It hurts.”

“I’m going to die.”

Calauhel thought that he at least wanted to save the NPCs that fought for him because he was their king and not because they were enticed by money or material things. If someone could save them, then Calauhel would give them whatever they wanted.

‘I’m sorry...’

He felt sorry for these people, who served such an incompetent king. But then, something very surprising happened.

[Another king has entered the Tomb of the Kings!]

Chapter 785

Calauhel was drained and exhausted. As the head of the Rothschilde Family, he had received the envious gazes of many people from a young age.

Unlike other people, the young Calauhel and his friends would often talk about things related to the economy and ways to make more money. The people that surrounded him were either those that wanted to gain his attention for his money, or those that wanted to see him fall down.

The same had been true for the only woman that Calauhel had loved. Back then, he thought that she truly loved him for who he was, and not for his money. However, the woman belonged to an ordinary household and his family opposed their relationship vehemently.

Calauhel had asked her.

—Shall we run away together?

—H, huh? Run away?

—That's right. I'm willing to throw away my family just to be with you.

—Give me time to think about it.

The woman never showed up after that. In the end, it was not Calauhel's love that she wanted but the great wealth that he stood to inherit.

Calauhel felt like his life was boring and dreary. He had no goals. Since he had more money than anybody else in the world, he did not have much desire to do anything and aim for success.

Then, one day, Athenae was released. When he first opened his eyes in Athenae, the instructor had greeted him with tough words.

—Hey, novice. What are you looking so dazed for? Go there and hit the scarecrow with your wooden sword! Quick!

It was the first time that Calauhel was treated like this. They saw him as a person and not some kind of walking money bag.

—Novices need passion!

—You need to raise your level so you can go to higher hunting grounds!

The NPCs treated him as an ordinary player, not as the family head of the Rothschilde family.

—Do you not know who I am? How dare you...

Calauhel had growled at the instructor at first. However, after receiving such a trivial and insignificant quest and hitting those scarecrows, Calauhel somehow found himself smiling.

This was a new world. For the first time in his life, he found a goal. His goal was to become the most outstanding ranker in Athenae. However, he never entertained the foolish thought that he could do it with his own power alone. No, he wanted to become the biggest and most influential person in this world.

So, following that goal, he founded the Blackstone Group and collected various artifacts. During that process, he gained players who followed him because they liked him and not just because he had the money. Then, he built a kingdom.

However, as it turned out, becoming the best ranker was very difficult. After Gaerna's hunt, Calauhel's kingdom took a huge hit. However, during that hunt, Calauhel was able to realize the importance of the NPCs.

Calauhel recalled the boy, who looked at him with his fists curled up on his chest in a salute, who joined their expedition to the Tomb of the Kings. He immediately approached the boy and saw the respect that filled his eyes. With his shaking voice, the boy had said:

—Your Majesty...

His pure eyes shone brightly.

—I hope that you will never get injured. And... please don't back down.

—...

Calauhel turned around, his face blank as he clenched his fists tightly.

'I won't give up. I won't back down. I will make it so you can live in a better nation, a better kingdom.'

Unfortunately, reality was a bitter pill to swallow.

[The soldiers' morale has dramatically decreased.]

[They are shaking with fear and terror.]

[Please make sure that you have left your current location and have advanced within ten minutes.]

[If you don't advance, your HP will continue to decrease.]

Calauhel had stopped because he could no longer bear to take another step forward. He knew better than anybody else that the remaining troops accompanying him would all die if he decided to advance.

Lesso, who watched Calauhel hesitate to advance, looked at him worriedly. Lesso had followed Calauhel since he built Blackstone.

"Your Majesty, are you alright?"

Calauhel smiled bitterly at Lesso's question. 'He's going to be forced to log out soon, but he's still worried about me.'

Lesso was one of the powerhouses that ranked in the global top 1,000. If Lesso had chosen to defect to the Luvien Empire, he would have received preferential treatment and would have grown much more than he had grown now. However, he had chosen to stay. With the fall of the Rothschild Kingdom, he was pushed out of the top 3,000 rankings. It was not just Lesso. There were also quite a few high rankers that followed Calauhel because they truly liked him.

Then, Rothschild Kingdom's pride and the one hailed as their Sword Master, Knight Commander Ruman, approached him and said, "Your Majesty, your complexion looks bad."

Calauhel laughed bitterly as he looked at both of his loyal subjects.

'Right, Minhyuk has vassals that follow him because they like him.'

"It would have been better if you did not serve me and served Minhyuk instead..."

"Your Majesty, please don't say that!!!"

"How can you say that to us, Your Majesty!"

"..."

Calauhel had been muttering to himself and complaining about his own self lately. Although it was sad to admit such a fact, it was the truth. If these talents lived in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, they would probably live better lives and would have already reached a higher place.

Knight Commander Ruman smiled faintly and said, "I am very happy that you are the one that I'm serving, Your Majesty."

Calauhel was left speechless. Why were the people around him so obstinate?

Lesso, who looked at him in confusion, said, "Who do you think is the other king that entered?"

"Maybe he's leading a lot of troops too?"

The notifications that they had heard a few moments ago mentioned that a king, other than Calauhel, had entered the Tomb of the Kings. The number of kingdoms founded by players had been increasing at a rapid rate. That was why it was hard for them to guess who entered.

[Please continue to advance.]

[If you don't advance within a minute, your HP will continue to go down.]

Calauhel realized that he could no longer delay, his hands gripping the hilt of his sword tightly.

"Until the end!!!"

"Until the very end!!!"

The knights and soldiers that accompanied Calauhel squeezed the last of their strength as they shouted and stood up.

Meanwhile, some of the mercenaries looked at Calauhel with mockery evident in their eyes. After all, this would mark the end of his majestic and magnificent career in Athenae.

With Calauhel at the vanguard, the group began to advance once again. At some point, darkness engulfed everyone. Calauhel took a deep breath, his nerves tightening from tension.

Then, a gloomy and eerie notification rang in their ears.

[The One that challenged to prove their qualifications to stand above other kings.]

[Death will be given upon those that are not qualified.]

[The Locae Kingdom's cavalry remains a legend. The day that the Locae Kingdom's 100 cavalry men marched forward is the day that the waves will split apart. They will march forward and pierce through the enemy camp.]

[The Locae Kingdom's Legendary Cavalry has appeared!]

"Hihihihihihihihing!"

"Hihihihihihihihihihihihing!"

[The soldiers of Fulcan Kingdom nurtured by Knight Echen can make an empire tremble in fear and terror.]

[The Fulcan Kingdom Soldiers have appeared!]

The moment the darkness gave way to light, Calauhel was greeted with a charging cavalry. Even the long lines of statues of soldiers that surrounded them began to move.

[Legendary Cavalry. Level 543.]

[Fulcan Kingdom's Soldiers. Level 510.]

There were around 800 cavalymen and 1,000 Fulcan Kingdom soldiers. Their levels were beyond what an ordinary soldier could handle.

“Stop them!!!”

The tanker players rushed to form a shield at Calauhel's command. Then, the cavalry collided with the tankers' shields.

Boooooooooooooom—

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

However, the huge impact forced the tankers back, creating a gap that the cavalry took advantage of as they skillfully stabbed their spears through the small cracks in their defenses. That was not all, the Fulcan Kingdom soldiers also shot arrows that pierced through the bodies of the Rothschilde Kingdom's troops.

“Mages!!!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

The ranker mages swept the cavalry with their explosion magic. However, it seemed like the cavalry had a high defense, to the point that none of their magic even put a scratch or a dent on them.

“Destroy.”

The Maestro of Destruction Calauhel squeezed the last of his strength as he swung his sword that was crackling with red sparks.

[The One that Destroys.]

[The current of destruction will inflict 4,400% damage to all of the enemies within a thirty-meter radius.]

Crack, crack, crack! Crackle!

The red electric current swept through the cavalry and made them shake and tremble from the shock. The rankers and knights of the Rothschilde Kingdom took the opportunity to jump on the cavalry and cut them down. Of course, Calauhel followed right behind them.

“Your, Your Majesty!!!”

Calauhel gritted his teeth. The reason why he jumped into the vanguard himself was so he could buy more time, even if it was only for a brief moment. It was all for his soldiers to live.

Slash, slash! Slash!

Calauhel was also one of the rankers who represented their nation during the Battle of the Thrones. He could easily sweep away the cavalymen and the soldiers with a swing of his sword.

“Cry.”

Boooooooooooooooooooooom—

A huge meteorite fell from the sky with a swing of Calauhel's sword. Despite his shortcomings, he was strong. On top of that, he was equipped with various high-grade and top-quality artifacts.

"Uwooooooooooo!"

Seeing Calauhel fight like that gave the soldiers of the Rothschilde Kingdom energy, allowing them to push the enemy back.

"As, as expected of His Majesty...!"

The players and the mercenaries looked at Calauhel in admiration. He was showing an overwhelming and majestic dance that none of them could even imitate or catch up to.

[Lebannon King's Curse.]

[All of your skills are restricted for one minute.]

[All of your defensive power will drop by 30% for one minute!]

"..."

Calauhel, who has been pushing back his enemies with his skills, bit his lips tightly. Now that his skills had been rendered useless, the veteran cavalry and soldiers began to charge and sweep away the Rothschilde troops.

"Uwaaaaaaaack!!!"

The screams of his dying soldiers rang in Calauhel's ears, bringing forth a sense of urgency. Without his skills, all he could do was swing his sword again and again and again.

"Keuaaaaaack!!!"

"Aaaaaaack!"

"Your, Your Majesty...! Please, please don't die...!"

"Please make the revival of the Rothschilde Kingdom come true!!!"

"I beg of you, please take care of my daughter Hennil!"

"I don't want to die... I don't want to die...!"

The deaths of NPCs were real deaths. Calauhel, who could only listen to the dying screams of his men, felt extremely helpless.

Stab—

"..."

At that moment, one of the young soldiers jumped in front of him and wrapped him in a hug to protect him from a spear that was about to stab through his body.

These people had treated him kindly. These soldiers saw and treated him as a person, and not someone that could just give them money. Even the soldier that threw himself in harm's way to protect Calauhel, was looking at him as his king and was filled with respect for him.

Then, the spear that pierced through the chest of the soldier was pulled out.

Spuurt—!

“Ah...!”

“Your Majesty.” The soldier smiled weakly, his body falling to the ground while spurting blood nonstop. “Please take good care of yourself.”

Calauhel’s despair grew as he watched the soldier die in his arms. At that moment, he caught sight of Knight Commander Ruman getting pierced by a spear while another flew for his neck.

Calauhel did not know why, but when he came back to his senses, he was already running toward Ruman. He heard Commander Ruman’s words in his head.

—I am very happy that you are the one that I’m serving, Your Majesty.

Perhaps it was because of those words that he jumped forward and hugged the man tightly to protect him with his own body.

Shwaaaaaa—!

[Your HP has dropped below 75%!]

“Your, Your Majesty...?”

Calauhel hugged Ruman tightly as the cavalry and soldiers surrounded them and stabbed him with their spears non-stop.

[Your HP has dropped below 50%!]

[Your HP has dropped below 45%!]

“Thank you, Ruman,” Calauhel said, smiling faintly even though the spears continued to pierce through his body.

Then, suddenly, all of the cavalry and soldiers stopped in their tracks.

[The Tomb’s Kings are watching you with interest.]

[The Tomb’s Kings evaluates you as incompetent. However, they will test your qualifications as someone who values the lives of his soldiers more than his own life.]

[New Class.]

[King Above Kings.]

[You can become the God of all of the kings.]

Despite the sweet and thrilling notifications, the cavalymen and the soldiers began to move once again.

[The Tomb’s Kings might be watching you with interest, but they will never accept someone incompetent!]

[If you fail to reach the end of the tomb, then you will not be able to gain a new class.]

Attacks rained upon Calauhel’s body once again while the screams of his soldiers rang in his ears. A new class? He did not care about it anymore.

Calauhel looked around him. Even though he was being cut and stabbed by the enemies' spears and swords, his soldiers and the players under his command still continued to jump forward to try and save his own ugly self. However, all of them were swept away by the cavalry. He bit his lips as he looked at them.

Calauhel was the family head of the Rothschilde Family. He had grown up to be arrogant, believing that there was no one above him. But now, people that he cared about were dying in front of his eyes.

"Please..." Calauhel opened his trembling lips and pleaded to that other king who entered the Tomb of the Kings. "Please. Help me. Please save my men!!!"

He knew that his desperate cries would remain unanswered. After all, no one in their right mind would help their rival. However, Calauhel felt like this was the last straw that he could grab.

The once arrogant Calauhel cried out once again, "Please save my soldiers!!! I'll do anything, please!!!"

Calauhel's cries were filled with both anguish and hope.

Then, several spears appeared in Calauhel's vision. Once those spears pierced through them, he and his soldiers would all die.

Swoosh—

But then, at that moment, the spears that were approaching them suddenly split in two as the shadow of someone who blocked the enemy in front of Calauhel fell upon him.

The man looked back at Calauhel with a sad look on his face as he said, "You look tired, Calauhel."

Then, the notifications rang in Calauhel's ears.

[The other challenger of the Tomb of the Kings is suggesting an alliance.]

[The person that suggested an alliance is 'Beyond the Heavens' King Minhyuk!]

[Would you like the Rothschilde Kingdom to form an alliance with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?]

Chapter 786

To be honest, Calauhel was actually very jealous of Minhyuk.

According to Calauhel's standards, he might find Minhyuk, a successor to Korea's biggest company, to be ridiculous and laughable. After all, Calauhel had enough net worth to buy several companies. On top of that, it was not even that strange for the man that he was jealous of to die at any given moment, because he was afflicted with a very rare disease called 'Eating Addiction.'

Yet, why was Calauhel jealous of Minhyuk?

'He has the will to move forward.'

It was because Minhyuk's strong will allowed him to stand tall and never back down.

'There are many people around him.'

On top of that, Minhyuk was always surrounded by people who truly loved and cared for him. However, the utmost reason why Calauhel was jealous of Minhyuk was probably because even if he left everything behind, the man would still be very happy.

Why was someone that lacked a lot of things compared to him still happier than him? This was the main reason why Calauhel was jealous of Minhyuk. Despite his misgivings, as time went by, Calauhel began to unknowingly acknowledge Minhyuk.

During Gaerna's hunt, Calahuel made a deal with Minhyuk. Back then, he gave him tens of billions of won more than their agreed price because of his goodwill.

However, Minhyuk had suffered from Calauhel's tricks and antics for a long time. In fact, they were already at odds since the time when Calauhel was leading Blackstone.

But now, these notifications rang in Calauhel's ears.

[The other challenger of the Tomb of the Kings is suggesting an alliance.]

[The person that suggested an alliance is 'Beyond the Heavens' King Minhyuk!]

[Would you like the Rothschild Kingdom to form an alliance with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?]

Calauhel was very surprised to see Minhyuk appear before him and split the spears aimed at him.

When he looked around, he saw a man standing a bit further away from them. It seemed like this man was the one that came with Minhyuk. That was right, only two people had come. The notification sounded so grand and majestic, saying that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was suggesting an alliance, but there were only two people that came.

Calauhel had his own pride and ego. Especially when it came to Minhyuk. However, he abandoned it all.

"Minhyuk, I beg you. Please, please save my soldiers!" He shouted without any hesitation.

[You have accepted the alliance with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom inside the Tomb of the Kings!]

"Your Majesty...!"

"No!"

"How can this be..."

Calauhel's vassals were very shocked to see their king shout desperately at Minhyuk and beg him to save them. This was because they knew what kind of existence Minhyuk was to Calauhel. But for Calauhel, their survival was far more important than his pride and ego.

'No matter how strong Food God Minhyuk is, the appearance of two people would not make any difference...' Lesso thought as he looked at Beyond the Heavens' King Minhyuk.

Lesso hated this man. He hated that this man forced his own king to humble himself and make him look shabby. Besides, there was no guarantee that they would be able to overcome this difficulty just because a single person appeared.

Then, Minhyuk said, "Calauhel."

"..."

"Don't beg so easily. This is not a favor; this is a deal between you and me."

The soldiers of Rothschild Kingdom, including Lesso, were very surprised. The words that Minhyuk said might have sounded crude, but it was undeniable that he was respecting and honoring the status and position of Calauhel, the current ruler of the Rothschild Kingdom.

Minhyuk took out a parchment from his inventory and stretched his palm out. This parchment was none other than a 'Memorize Magic Parchment' that contained Golden Mage Ali's 'Compress' magic. It had to be known that the higher Ali's level was, the better his lower-tiered magic would become. Right now, his Compress magic had evolved to the point that it would only gather allies. All of the Rothschild Kingdom's troops, including Calauhel, were pulled back until they were gathered behind Minhyuk.

However, there were still hundreds of cavalymen and soldiers that were charging toward Minhyuk, who was now blocking their path to the rest of the troops.

[Intangible Sword.]

[Your enemies will be attacked by invisible swords for five minutes. Your attacks will reach everyone within your ten-meter radius.]

[You can use Sword Manipulation and send hundreds of invisible swords toward your enemies.]

[Your sword's attack will increase by 900%. The movement speed of your Sword Manipulation will also be ten times faster than your speed of wielding your sword.]

Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish—!

The sound of the wind blowing strongly around them rang in their ears as hundreds of invisible swords cut through the charging crowd of cavalymen and soldiers under Minhyuk's manipulation.

"Hihihihihihihihing!"

"Hihihihihihihing!"

"Keuaaaaaack!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaack!"

The sound of their flesh ripping and the enemies' screams echoed in the area. However, Minhyuk remained cautious.

'There are a lot of things that we're still unaware of inside the Tomb of the Kings. I have to save my skills as much as I can for maximum efficiency.'

Of course, Minhyuk was wary of the Tomb of the Kings. After all, it was a dungeon that boasted a higher difficulty than what he imagined. That was why he limited the use of his skills and only focused on using passive skills that did not consume any MP or trigger a skill's cooldown.

The passive skill that he used was none other than Explosion, a passive that had a 40% probability of getting triggered and inflicting 2,500% additional damage to his targets. But that was not all. It could also trigger an explosion that would inflict 1,400% additional damage to everyone within a ten-meter radius.

On top of that, Explosion belonged to the other passive Lightning, which corresponded to the 'Absolute God's Secret' skill that he had, which could go beyond ordinary god rank skills.

The blade of Minhyuk's sword carried the character 'Explosion' on it. When he swung his sword, a loud and overwhelming explosion bloomed and swept away the cavalrymen.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Meanwhile, the surviving troops of the Rothschild Kingdom were rendered speechless after witnessing the aftermath caused by an 'Absolute God's Secret' skill.

'That's ridiculous. Are you telling me that's a passive skill?'

'He can easily sweep away those powerful troops with just a passive skill?'

Minhyuk could swing his sword thrice in a second. With the Explosion's 40% probability of getting triggered, he could actually trigger Explosion once every second.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Booooooooooom—

Baaaaaaaaaaaaam—

After triggering a series of explosions, Minhyuk also incurred damages. He had been stabbed and cut several times by the enemies' spears and swords when he jumped at the gaps in their defenses.

However, bloody beads would often rise from the bodies of the enemies that he attacked and get absorbed into his body. These bloody beads were produced by 'Slaughterer's Absorption', a skill attached to the Slaughterer's Armor.

These notifications also rang in Minhyuk's ears every time an attack landed on his body.

[Steel Skin.]

[Your physical and magical defenses have instantly tripled.]

The Steel Skin was a passive skill that Minhyuk had acquired from the God of Happiness through the Food God's True Worth, and it had a 20% chance of getting triggered.

Minhyuk's defense as the top high-ranker was already beyond one's imagination. If it was tripled, then most of the Named Monsters in existence would not be able to inflict much damage on him.

'This is ridiculous...'

'Is the gap between us and the Food God really this large?'

Among all of the people present, the one who could not believe the scene in front of him the most was Lesso. Although he had been pushed out of the top 3,000 rankings, Lesso was still a high ranker. That was the reason for his struggle.

The soldiers and the cavalrymen, enemies that they had a hard time fighting, were unable to deal any significant damage to Minhyuk.

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

They saw the stalwart back of Minhyuk, who had been swinging his sword non-stop and sweeping away the enemy cavalry and soldiers, through the thick cloud of dust. He did not even look like he was out of breath.

At this moment, the people of Rothschild Kingdom realized something.

‘Ah, we shouldn’t think that only two people came here.’

‘He’s just one person, but it feels like an entire army came here...’

Then, the notifications rang in their ears.

[You have wiped out the Legendary Cavalry of the Locae Kingdom!]

[You have acquired 100 Legendary Cavalry Parchments, parchments that can turn ordinary cavalrymen into legendary cavalrymen.]

[You have acquired 100 Nurturing Parchments, parchments that can turn ordinary soldiers into strong men that can rival the soldiers of the Fulcan Kingdom.]

[You have acquired 485 platinum.]

[You have acquired King Lebannon’s Treasure Box.]

[You have acquired 100 Legendary Cavalry Warhorses.]

[You have acquired 100 Fulcan Kingdom’s Soldier’s Storm Swords.]

The Rothschild Kingdom’s troops were shocked when they heard about the rewards that they had acquired. The platinum was shocking enough. Somehow, they were also able to obtain 100 warhorses, as well as power that could turn ordinary soldiers into 100 legendary cavalry and another 100 strong soldiers that could rival the soldiers of Fulcan Kingdom.

‘Since this is the Tomb of the Kings, the rewards that they are giving are rewards that will help one develop a stronger and more powerful kingdom, right?’

‘The risks might be great, but the rewards are also superb.’

‘However, the difficulty is just too high for us to be able to clear.’

While the Rothschild Kingdom’s troops were busy thinking about this, Calauhel had already approached Minhyuk.

When Minhyuk entered the Tomb of the Kings, he was quite surprised to find out that another kingdom was already there. Minhyuk moved quickly, hoping that the other kingdom had not yet monopolized whatever was inside the Tomb of the Kings. That was when he heard Calauhel's voice.

Why did Minhyuk help him? He had many reasons.

One, Minhyuk believed that the Rothschild Kingdom might really need some help in this place.

Two, Calauhel had given him tens of billions of won during Gaerna's hunt as a show of good faith.

Three, he was moved by the fact that Calauhel had significantly changed from the past. Calauhel had a bitter rivalry with Minhyuk since a long time ago. But his changes had made Minhyuk move.

Of course, he also took care of the necessary while helping protect Calauhel's momentum and prestige. The rewards that they got here were all taken by Minhyuk.

Then, Minhyuk recalled the notification that he had heard earlier.

[You might be able to gain the class: King Above Kings.]

There was a chance that this same notification was heard by Calauhel too. However, Minhyuk had heard something from Dungeon Explorer Bran before.

—Give up on the class King Above Kings. From what I understand, you will be able to trigger an easter egg if you give up on the class.

As expected of Bran, he was truly an amazing talent. Well, Minhyuk did not really need it in the first place. There was no need for him to abandon the Food God class or the Battle God's Descendant class just for the King Above Kings.

At the same time, this notification rang in the ears of everyone present.

[There are currently two candidates for the class: King Above Kings.]

However, the two ignored the notification.

“Why did you help me?”

“What are you talking about? This is nothing but a deal. I'll be taking 90% of the rewards from here on out.”

“...”

Calauhel felt an unknown emotion well up within him when Minhyuk insisted that this was a deal until the very end. If this was nothing but a mere favor, then Calauhel would be left struggling to keep his side alive. However, Calauhel was aware that Minhyuk did not help him just so he could obtain something.

Then, he received a whisper.

[Minhyuk: The almighty Calauhel has always been arrogant. Just be yourself.]

[Calauhel: ...Thanks.]

Minhyuk was honestly surprised to see the whisper that Calauhel sent back. He never thought that the arrogant and almighty Calauhel would say 'thanks' to someone else.

Of course, after seeing Minhyuk's whisper, Calauhel decided to truly act like himself.

"You must have also heard that this is the land owned by one of the Eight Pillars. It seems like you helped us because you thought that it was very difficult to clear on your own, right?"

That was right; this was the true Calauhel.

"But if I hadn't come, then all of you would have already been wiped out, no?"

"That's a different matter. You're the one that suggested an alliance. And that's because you needed our strength. Am I wrong?"

The players and soldiers of the Rothschilde Kingdom were very relieved to see Calauhel back to his usual self once again.

'His Majesty has returned to his usual self.'

'That's right. He is someone that will not back down even after seeing the excellent display that the Food God had shown us just now.'

They were relieved to see Calauhel and Minhyuk bicker and argue back and forth like that.

"That's right, I will acknowledge that. I need your help too. However, what can you even do for me now?"

"..."

Both Calauhel and his troops turned silent at that. This was the end of Minhyuk's help. Now, Minhyuk was acting shrewdly and being very calculative. Besides, what he said was true. What could someone, who was on the verge of being wiped out, truly do?

"Calauhel, let's make another deal." Minhyuk brought forward another suggestion. "I'm sure you have heard the notification about the class: King Above Kings."

That was right. Calauhel was also aware that it could only be given to one person.

Minhyuk had chosen to give up on this class from the very beginning. After all, according to Bran, this was the only way to trigger an easter egg.

"As you have heard, the class King Above Kings is a class that the souls of the kings sleeping in this tomb will give to the one that they have recognized and acknowledged. However, they do not acknowledge you."

Calauhel wanted to be the King Above Kings. However, he knew more than anybody else that Minhyuk was the one with the qualifications to get the class.

Minhyuk licked his lips and lied without even blinking, "To be honest, I can have three classes. However, just like what I said earlier, let's make another deal. I will help you to gain the recognition and the acknowledgement of the kings here so that you can obtain the King Above Kings."

"..."

Calauhel was shocked. If he became the King Above Kings in this place that was owned by one of the Eight Pillars, then he might be able to obtain tremendous powers. But this man in front of him was actually willing to concede and give up on that opportunity.

Yes, Calauhel was very desperate. He needed the class King Above Kings to protect his Rothschild Kingdom. However, he also thought that Minhyuk must also want the class.

‘He can have three classes?’

Of course, that was just some bullshit that Minhyuk spouted. He could only have two classes, and he truly did not need the King Above Kings. However, Calauhel did not know that. Hearing those words made Calauhel go down a very different path of thought.

‘Is he giving that class up for my sake?’

Calauhel had no other choice but to think that way. Then, he could not help but think of the times when he treated Minhyuk as his bitter rival and the times that he blatantly said that he hated him.

—You look tired, Calauhel.

When he thought back, he was certain Minhyuk’s eyes were filled with warmth(?) when he said those words. Calauhel felt deeply moved when he recalled the matter. That was right, Minhyuk’s generosity and kindness knew no bounds.

‘I wonder what I should ask for? If it’s Calauhel, then I can probably ask for a lot of things, right? Should I try asking for some God-grade ingredients?’

On the other hand, Minhyuk was considering what he would demand in exchange for the King Above Kings class that he was pretending to yield over.

Then, at that moment, Calauhel’s whisper arrived.

[Calauhel: From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I know that class is also precious to you but you’re willingly giving up on it for me. You even looked at me kindly and worried about my exhaustion and fatigue.]

“???”

[Calauhel: I could see the warmth in your eyes when you voiced your worries about me earlier. I felt like I saw an old friend. Don’t you think so too?]

“???”

Calauhel’s eyes were starting to shine with tears.

[Calauhel: I, Rausch, the head of the Rothschild Family promise you in my name and my family...]

“???”

[Calauhel: ...will repay you for this gratitude. When the time comes that you will need my help, I will utilize the entire power of my family to aid you.]

“...”

Minhyuk could not help but murmur under his breath, ‘A sudden windfall?’

Chapter 787

There were once talks about how the Rothschilde Family could shake the entire global economy with their financial prowess. It was rumored that the total assets of this well-known family were worth around fifty quadrillion. They had enough money to buy several large companies and still have some left over.

Rausch Rothschilde was the man that would become the family head of the Rothschilde Family. He was the one that was actively leading the Rothschilde Family and was praised as an outstanding family head.

Those in politics and business, in fact almost everyone in the world, wanted to forge a relationship with Rausch. However, none of them was able to win his heart. For Rausch, everything was simply a business transaction.

But now, Rausch, who was called Calauhel in Athenae, was looking at Minhyuk with red eyes. He looked like he was deeply moved.

‘N, no. I know that this is a sweet and sudden windfall, but what’s the matter with your eyes?’

Minhyuk felt like the blazing look from Calauhel was completely burdensome. However, Calauhel was still the king of the Rothschilde Kingdom. So, he hurriedly tried to hide his expression.

Then, Lesso stepped forward and said, “You said that you’re offering a deal and that you’re going to yield over the King Above Kings to His Majesty Calauhel. However, just like you said, only after the kings slumbering here have acknowledged the challenger will the King Above Kings be given. In other words, our kingdom has to receive the recognition and acknowledgement of the kings. How will you do that?”

It was a very reasonable question. What did being recognized have anything to do with the Food God?

Then, Minhyuk looked incredulously at Lesso and said, “After watching me earlier, did you come to believe that I’m a combat class?”

“...!”

Lesso and the other players were very shocked to hear those words.

‘That’s right. The Food God is not someone with a combat class...’

‘I mistook him for someone with a combat class because of how strong he was.’

Goosebumps rose all over their bodies. They had forgotten that Minhyuk was not from a combat class, even though he was excellent in combat and even his abilities were outstanding.

‘He can live and survive on his own in the world, no?’

As the thought flashed in their heads, they heard Minhyuk say, “As I mentioned earlier, I will receive 90% of the rewards. On top of that, I will require one God-grade ingredient, as well as 200,000 platinum.”

God-grade ingredients were valuable and priceless ingredients. However, there was even a 200,000 platinum fee on top of that. That amount was enough to pay for an entire kingdom's maintenance fee for a year.

"That's too much..."

Lesso, who was caught in a fit of rage, was about to step forward. However, Calauhel was a step faster than him. He stopped Lesso while looking at Minhyuk deeply and said, "I understand."

"...I, I see. Thanks for your kind and willing response."

Twitch—

"..."

Calauhel's burdensome gaze made Minhyuk want to flee.

Then, Lesso said, "No matter how powerful you are, how dare you demand a god-grade ingredient?"

"We have one anyway, so does it really matter?"

"Your Majesty, you know how hard we worked to get it..."

"Lesso, let's be honest, where will that God-grade ingredient be used?"

Lesso's eyes grew wide. That was right. Food God Minhyuk had a skill that allowed him to feed more than ten people with a single dish. Of course, this skill could only be used if they were from the same guild or were allies. In other words, this was the method that Minhyuk would use to help Calauhel get recognized and acknowledged.

'There will be at least ten people that can eat buffed dishes made from the God-grade ingredients in this place.'

"It's actually been a while since we acquired this God-grade ingredient. But if it's you, I think you won't find it tricky to deal with."

Calauhel had seen videos of Food God Minhyuk cooking God-grade ingredients. Most of the God-grade ingredients can cause huge amounts of damage to the chef handling them. However, the ingredient that they had in their hand was special.

"The ingredient is sealed. However, all of the people that unsealed it and tried to cook it died."

It was most definitely a strange and unfamiliar ingredient.

"So far, most of the god-grade ingredients have only caused damage when cooking. What killed them?"

"It's magic. The ingredient constantly casts magic, high-class magic at that. Do you think it's fine?" Calauhel asked gently as he looked at Minhyuk.

‘If you think that it’s too dangerous, then you don’t have to do it, my dear and precious friend.’

Minhyuk shied away from his gaze and said, “I’ll do it.”

Minhyuk had added the ingredient to the deal since it was a way for him to help the others here become strong. However, he had other reasons too.

‘God-grade ingredients are very delicious. Fufufu.’

He was getting paid for eating something delicious.

Calauhel nodded as he pulled out the ingredient from his inventory. It was inside a fancy box. When Minhyuk received it, the notifications rang.

[You have acquired 600g of Vicious Magic’s Pork Ribs.]

[It is currently in a sealed state inside the ‘Box of Suppression.’]

“...Ho?”

Minhyuk was amazed. The ingredient that Calauhel took out was truly great.

‘If we’re talking about ribs, then...’ Minhyuk grinned. ‘I can make some braised pork ribs.’

Just the thought alone was enough to make Minhyuk’s mouth water. He imagined himself picking up a piece of the steaming ribs from the still-boiling braised dish. Then, he would put everything in his mouth and pull the bones out, leaving only the lean meat inside. Minhyuk preferred to have the meat fall cleanly off when it came to braised pork ribs.

‘Braised pork ribs is one of the Korean dishes that foreigners love the most.’

He was sure that the others, who would eat this dish through the skill Everyone’s Delight, would also be very satisfied.

“Heh...” Minhyuk drooled. He was already very delighted with the dish even though he was just imagining it.

“Don’t open it yet. Open it once we get far enough.”

Those words sounded cowardly, but what else could Calauhel do? He and the Rothschild Kingdom’s troops still had to survive. Calauhel knew that an overwhelming amount of magic would pour out the moment Minhyuk opened that box.

Minhyuk just shook his head when faced with Calahuel’s apprehension of the box. He said, “You’ll be fine.”

Then, Minhyuk triggered his skill.

“Let’s Have a Meal.”

This was an absolute barrier that would remain standing for at most half an hour. Attacks made within the barrier would also not affect the others. After doing all that, Minhyuk quickly checked the pork ribs’ information.

(Vicious Magic's Pork Ribs)

Ingredient Grade: God

Special Abilities:

- You can supplement the parts that you want to supplement.
- Your attack and defense will increase by at least 1.3x.
- Your skills or magic skills will increase tremendously.
- Complex fire control is needed for cooking.

Description: It is an ingredient found in some decrepit and ancient ruins presumed to be hidden by some god. It will send out 3rd~8th class magic and indiscriminately bomb the one that will cook the ingredients. The blood has been drained so it can be cooked right away.

Fortunately, there was some sort of silver lining. The fact that the blood was already drained meant that he did not need to spend time doing that anymore.

Minhyuk, while inside the Let's Have a Meal barrier, slowly opened the box in front of him.

Boooooooooooooom—

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

At that moment, Explosion magic was triggered one after another. Explosion was a wide area of effect 3rd class magic that Mages could learn. Its class was not extremely high, but when it came to magic, the one that cast the magic was also of great importance.

In Calauhel's point of view, the magic that this ingredient could cast was enough to cause damage to players that were at least 60 levels higher than high-leveled mages.

The barrier created by Let's Have a Meal could cover an area with a five-meter radius. Calauhel could not help but worry about Minhyuk after seeing the violent explosion that erupted from within the area that the barrier protected. When they first opened that ingredient, it killed those around it within five seconds.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Everyone present could not help but gasp in awe when they saw the scene inside the barrier after the thick cloud of dust that bloomed inside finally settled down.

Glug, glug, glug, glug, glug—

They saw Minhyuk pouring water into a cauldron while enduring the explosions that erupted and engulfed his entire being.

'I have to finish it as soon as possible.'

Something interesting also happened. Although the explosions were huge and violent, they did not create any rubble or debris. In other words, Minhyuk did not have to worry about any ashes from the explosions. The dish that he was cooking would not get dirty. Even more surprising was the fact that the explosion did not affect the ingredients that Minhyuk was using.

After pouring water into the cauldron, Minhyuk immediately swept all of the chopped pork ribs inside.

[Diss.]

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

At that moment, a bright light flashed inside the barrier as dozens of the magic Diss pierced through Minhyuk's body.

[Your HP has dropped below 60%.]

[The strong impact of the attack has made your vision turn blurry and hazy.]

Before he could respond, another round of Diss was triggered.

[Diss.]

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom—

Despite the light flashing brightly around him and his rapidly declining HP, Minhyuk, with his superb concentration, continued to cook. He quickly took out a bottle of potion and drank its contents in one go.

[You have consumed Mandala's Recovery Elixir.]

[You have recovered 50% of your HP.]

He was quite relieved to see that his HP had recovered as quickly as it declined. In fact, Mandala could only make one bottle of Mandala's Recovery Elixir each day. Prior to this expedition, God of Alchemy Mandala had made twenty bottles of this and handed them all to Minhyuk.

Immediately after that, Minhyuk took out a bottle of yellow potion and drank its contents.

[You have consumed Mandala's Magical Defense Elixir.]

[Your magical defense has increased by 80%!]

Minhyuk had several artifacts in his possession that could increase his magical defense. With the Magical Defense Elixir that increased it by another 80%, he could easily halve the damage that he would receive.

The potions that Mandala had given Minhyuk were extremely overpowering, as they did not have any cooldown. In other words, he could recover by drinking those potions one after another.

‘If it wasn't for Mandala then I would have already died here.’

Minhyuk looked at the pork ribs that were being cooked well, heaving a sigh of relief. Then, he took out the potatoes and stretched his hand over it.

[You cannot use the Ingredient Acquisition Skill while cooking the pork ribs.]

It was as he expected. He truly had to prepare everything personally.

[Hellfire.]

“...”

Just when Minhyuk was about to peel the potatoes, the notification made him realize that cooking this dish was truly going to be a difficult task.

Hellfire was a magic skill that was literally a ball of flames from hell. It was practically an exclusive skill for high-level mages. And this particular skill had appeared and struck Minhyuk, who was cooking inside the barrier.

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!!!”

“Minhyuuuuuuuuuuk!!!” Calauhel called out Minhyuk’s name the moment he saw the hellfire appear and engulf his body.

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

The Rothschilde players and soldiers looked at Calauhel, who was calling out desperately to Minhyuk, in confusion. However, they could not deny the fact that they were also very nervous. They could not see Minhyuk’s figure from within the black flames. As if to add fuel to the fire, one disaster came after another.

[Meteor.]

[Explosion.]

[Lightning Storm.]

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

Crackleeee—

Countless magical attacks ran amok inside the small area covered by the barrier. The gigantic meteor shook the entire tomb while blazing flames and crackling lightning licked and flew inside the transparent barrier.

“This, this is not something that one can endure.”

‘No matter how powerful Minhyuk is, there’s no way that he can last against something like this!’

“What, what’s that?” Then, at that moment, one of the soldiers muttered, which made Calauhel turn his head.

There, they saw a man in the form of a spirit walking toward the barrier. The man was dressed in a pure white priestly robe.

[One of the ‘Kings’ of the Tomb of the Kings has appeared!]

The Tomb of the Kings was the place where the souls of all of the kings that had existed in the world were slumbering. Of course, there were quite a lot of special and powerful kings slumbering here too.

[The King has been recorded as a legend.]

[The King loved and cherished his people more than anybody else.]

[The King left behind the Legend of the Benevolent Ruler before turning into one of the stars in the sky.]

[The King is the one that ruled Happy Island.]

[The King came to meet the Beyond the Heavens' King!]

[The name of the Great King recorded in history as the Benevolent Ruler is...]

[His name is Effer!]

Effer stretched his hand and touched the barrier that isolated Minhyuk.

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[Meteor.]

[Explosion.]

[Lightning Storm.]

Minhyuk was shocked when he heard the notifications that rang out consecutively.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

The meteor that fell from the sky shook not only the ground but also Minhyuk's body. That was not all. The explosion that bloomed all over the place also struck him.

Bzzt, bzzt, bzzt, bzzt—

There was also a lightning storm that blew strong gusts of wind while zapping and electrocuting Minhyuk.

“Keuhaaaaaaaack!” Minhyuk unknowingly let out a scream.

Athenae was a game that did not really relay pain to its players. However, since it was a virtual reality game that had graphics that could be said to be almost lifelike and similar to that of reality, just having these magical attacks fall down and engulf the narrow area of five-meter radius was enough to gnaw at Minhyuk's spirit and mental strength.

The worst was that even Mandala's Recovery Elixir could not keep up with the amount of damage he was receiving from the continuous bombing of the magical attacks.

With the thick cloud of dust and the loud sounds of explosion ringing in his ears, Minhyuk did not have any way to check on the situation outside of his barrier.

[Your HP has dropped below 20%!]

[Your HP has dropped below 17%!]

[Your HP has dropped below 15%...]

Minhyuk's lips had already turned dry and cracked from the heat around him. To make matters worse, there were several magical attacks that were all getting ready to be triggered.

[Wind Cutter.]

[Fireball.]

[Lightning.]

This time, they were all low-class magical attacks. However, the magic that was being cast by this ingredient could be considered to be on a similar level to those by mages at Level 600 or higher. That was why it did not matter if the magic was low-class or high-class. Minhyuk knew that he would not be able to endure if hundreds more magical attacks came his way.

Crackle—

A small fireball shot toward Minhyuk. As though it was a signal, the rest of the magical attacks moved to strike him all at once.

Shwaaaaaaa—

But then, a strange thing happened. The fireball, which was almost right in front of Minhyuk's eyes, sizzled and disappeared into nothingness. When he looked around, he realized that the same thing happened to the other magical attacks.

When the hundreds of magic spells disappeared, Minhyuk finally saw the man, who had his hand on his transparent barrier. The man, who was in the form of a spirit, smiled softly at him.

“Your, Your Majesty Effer?”

The man was none other than Effer, who died not too long ago in Happy Island.

[Benevolent Ruler Effer's power is protecting you.]

[Effer's power and protection will last for three minutes!]

“Noble, it's been a while.”

It was quite a fresh and novel feeling to see Effer like this.

‘This is the Tomb of the Kings.’

Minhyuk never dreamt that Effer would be in this place. However, he was here. Right now, Effer's gaze as he looked at Minhyuk was filled with one question.

‘Are my people living well?’

Effer smiled in relief when he saw Minhyuk nod.

Meanwhile, Calauhel and the troops of Rothschild Kingdom looked at the scene in shock and astonishment.

‘He received help from one of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings?’

‘How far do his connections reach?’

On top of that, the king who helped Minhyuk was the one recognized as the ‘Legend of the Benevolent Ruler’ in history.

Effer looked like he had something to say to Minhyuk. “Minhyuk, this...”

However, Effer could not open his mouth any further than that. It was as if some sort of power was restricting him and stopping him from saying the rest of his words.

Effer could only sigh as he looked at Minhyuk once again. Then, he said, “Are you going to cook a God-grade dish?”

Minhyuk nodded while Effer looked at him with a bitter smile on his face.

“You have to make it.”

At that moment, Minhyuk noticed something strange. Effer did not say anything more than that. However, the idea that the Tomb of the Kings was not as simple as what he initially thought had already sprouted in his head.

Then, Minhyuk smiled at Effer. “Of course, I will succeed.”

Even if one used God-grade ingredients, there was no certainty that the dish would come out as a God-grade dish. There were many factors as well as several probabilities involved in making one. In the end, God-grade ingredients were just another way to help them get closer to the level of ‘God.’

Minhyuk was very glad to see Effer. However, time was short. He no longer had the leisure to talk with him.

Tak— tak, tak—

He quickly chopped and diced the kimchi, carrots, potatoes, and onions into bite-sized pieces. Then, after the pork ribs boiled once, he threw the water away and refilled it again.

Crackle—

The flames underneath the cauldron crackled into life once again. Minhyuk hurriedly made the sauce and spread it evenly in the cauldron. After that, all he had to do was to close the lid and wait for it to finish cooking.

However, according to the description of the Vicious Magic’s Pork Ribs, complex and intricate control of fire was needed when cooking. This was the trickiest part of the process.

[Please turn down the heat. If you don’t reduce the heat quickly, the ingredient will no longer be edible.]

‘Shit.’

Minhyuk’s face turned ugly. The water inside the cauldron had not even boiled yet. However, the ingredient said to reduce the heat.

[Please raise the heat to medium heat. If you don’t put it on medium heat quickly...]

Minhyuk controlled the fire once again.

[Please raise the heat to the highest...]

He hurriedly controlled the fire and followed the instructions that the notifications said.

‘I didn’t expect that using a cauldron would backfire on me like this.’

There were two main reasons why Minhyuk chose to use Ravier’s Bizarre Cauldron. The first one was because the buff effect would increase by 15% when the Bizarre Cauldron was used for cooking. The second one was that cauldrons could endure stronger flames. This meant that Minhyuk could skip the ordinary burner stove and opt for something stronger, which meant that he would be able to boil down his dishes faster.

‘I have to succeed in making a high-grade dish here so that Calauhel and the other players can be stronger.’

Minhyuk grew restless and impatient. He was constantly controlling and changing the level of flames underneath the cauldron while checking the time he had left of Effer’s protection. Of course, there was also the pressure of having to make a God-grade dish.

‘Huff, huff...’

He looked like he was being chased.

Effer, who saw him like that, said, “It seems like I made a slip of the tongue.”

“...Yes?” Minhyuk turned to look at Effer.

“I don’t know if this is because I said that you have to do it or not...” Effer looked bitter. “But your expression when cooking right now? It looks like you’re just cooking to become strong, Minhyuk.”

“...”

Minhyuk felt like he had been hit by a hammer on the head when he heard Effer say those words.

“I don’t know if this is because I told you to do it, but the way you look right now is not the one that I saw when you cooked the Great King Large Hairtail for me. It doesn’t look like you’re doing your best to eat something delicious.”

Only after hearing those words did Minhyuk realize it. When he looked back on everything that he had done so far, he realized that he had recently viewed cooking as a means and tool to become strong and not as a way to ‘taste delicious dishes.’ Of course, he had always thought of eating something delicious whenever he cooked. However, his thinking had clearly changed when compared to the past.

‘That’s right. I originally started Athenae so I can eat something delicious.’

But now, it had become a method to become stronger, a way to win the hearts of the people.

“I think it’s time for me to go back now.” Effer’s translucent body started to blur.

Minhyuk, who was pondering over his words, looked up at him with a small smile on his face and said, “Thank you for your reminder.”

Effer disappeared with a small smile on his face. His words had become a great lesson for Minhyuk.

‘Yeah. I’m playing Athenae to eat something delicious.’

At that moment, Minhyuk, who was cooking urgently as if he was being chased by something, relaxed as his mindset changed. He would not make these braised pork ribs as the most powerful dish, but as the most delicious braised pork ribs in the world. That was the dish that he would cook.

Crackleeee—

Minhyuk continued to control the fire. However, with Effer’s disappearance, the magic bombing continued once again.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—!

Most of the magic that fell upon him was exploding magic like Explosion. However, compared to the beginning, there was significantly less magic that bombed him. But Minhyuk ignored everything that was happening. All that was left in his head was the thought of how delicious the braised pork ribs would be once he was done cooking.

‘The sweetness of the braised short ribs will explode in the mouth once you bite on the meat and pull it off the bone.’

There was no other thought in his head except the thought of achieving the best harmony of flavors in the braised pork ribs that he was making.

Slash, slash, slash, slash—!

Calauhel and the soldiers of the Rothschild Kingdom were at a loss for words as they continued to watch the violent exploding magic that ran amok inside the barrier.

“His expression is so...”

“He looks so happy...”

It was that look of excitement on one’s face when they were about to eat something delicious. Despite the magic bombing that constantly fell on him, Minhyuk did not even budge an inch. In fact, he looked like he was truly enjoying what he was doing.

Cooking was Minhyuk’s shelter, his salvation and home. It was not a mere means to become stronger. It had made him happy and fulfilled, especially because he had always been hungry.

[You have fallen into an Extreme Trance.]

[You truly take delight and enjoy the process of cooking.]

[The dish that you made with your happiness might become more special.]

‘That’s right. I’m very happy right now.’

The fact that he would be able to eat this delicious dish made Minhyuk focus to the point that he could not perceive his surroundings. All he could think about was how he would eat this once he was done.

[The God of Cooking has turned your dish, which is being made with a ‘Happy Heart’, into something more special.]

[The God of Will is helping you realize new things and is stopping anything from getting in your way.]

[The Battle God smiles in delight as he looks at you, who is very happy at the thought of eating something delicious.]

However, Minhyuk did not hear the voices of the gods. His entire focus was on making the braised pork ribs in front of him the most delicious in the world.

‘Just you wait, I will make the tastiest braised pork ribs in the world,’ Minhyuk thought, a bright smile on his face.

Ruin and Eveio were two of the mercenaries hired by the Rothschilde Kingdom to enter the Tomb of the Kings. While everyone was distracted and had their attention on the Food God, the two slipped away and went deeper into the ruins.

The truth was, the one that sold the information to Calauhel about the Tomb of the Kings was none other than Ian, the global number one dungeon explorer. However, another dungeon explorer had approached Calauhel under Ian’s orders.

Ian was a business-minded person through and through. Right now, he was the dog of the Luvien Empire. That meant that he would do everything in his power to help the Luvien Empire prosper. That was why he approached the two mercenaries.

—The two of you should go and join the expedition for the Tomb of the Kings as mercenaries.

—The Tomb of the Kings?

—Are you telling us to go?

From what they heard from Ian, the Tomb of the Kings’ difficulty was at an extreme level that no king in existence could clear right now. So, why was he telling them to push themselves to their deaths?

—The Rothschilde Kingdom’s King and his army will be wiped out in that place. Since Calauhel will challenge the dungeon, he will lose his artifacts, skills and even his level if he fails. However, what’s interesting is the fact that the skill will only drop and not get deleted if he gets forced to log out. However, what’s more important is the fact that the artifact drop rate is several times higher than normal.

That was right. The reason why Ian sold that information to the Rothschilde Kingdom and asked them to enter was because he was confident that the Rothschilde Kingdom would be wiped out.

—Watch over them until the very end. Watch until they get annihilated. After that, I will enter and acquire everything.

It was a thrilling thought of having the opportunity to take everything away from them. Calauhel was a bigshot and was a recognized wealthy man in Athenae. But it was not just him, even the other

players would also drop artifacts. However, something unusual happened. Food God Minhyuk suddenly appeared and began to cook.

‘No way, are you telling me that a God-grade dish will appear?’

‘That’s impossible. However...’

The two were very confident that a God-grade dish would not appear. However, they were very afraid of the power that Food God Minhyuk wielded. If the Rothschild Kingdom had him by their side, then they might truly be able to clear the Tomb of the Kings.

Still, Ian had been prepared for situations like this.

—If, by any chance, they are doing exceptionally well. Then, there’s a simple way of dealing with them. The Tomb of the Kings is the land owned by one of the Eight Pillars, Aegaeon. Pray to Aegaeon and awaken him. If you do that, then something interesting will happen.

‘Then, even the Food God will drop his skills and artifacts.’

‘It would be very amazing if we can take everything from the Food God.’

The two did not know what the interesting thing that would happen was. Regardless, Ruin and Eveio were completely blinded by the benefits that they might possibly get. After following the map that Ian gave them, the two arrived safely in the place where Aegaeon’s statue was standing.

Who was Aegaeon? He was one of the Eight Pillars who stood side by side with Pope Kronad, Evil God Obren, and even Athenae. The two did not know anything about him since no information had been released yet. They just did what they were told and prayed, just like Ian instructed them to do.

“O’ noble and great one that has been slumbering for a very long time, please heed our calls and awaken...omitted...please lend us your strength!”

The two placed their hands together and prayed. During the prayer, Ruin pulled out a dagger and cut his palm. Then, he let his blood drip on the golden bowl that was sitting snugly on the hands of Aegaeon’s statue.

Drip—

Red blood slowly filled the bowl. Not long after, a red light burst out from the statue as a shocking notification rang in their ears.

[The power of the slumbering Aegaeon has temporarily awakened.]

[Aegaeon, one of the Eight Pillars, has command over all of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings.]

“Soldiers, prepare for battle.”

[All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have awakened!]

[All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have started to summon their armies!]

[All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have started to charge and eliminate the intruders!]

[Challengers must survive for thirty minutes from the attacks of all of the kings.]

At the same time.

Minhyuk, with a bright smile on his face, murmured, "Braised pork ribs. Complete!"

As the smile on his face grew wider, notifications began to ring in his ears.

[You have achieved the Easter Egg: 'The Most Delicious Dish in the World!']

[Achieving an Easter Egg has made your dish even more special!]

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[You have achieved the Easter Egg: 'The Most Delicious Dish in the World!']

[Achieving an Easter Egg has made your buff abilities even more special!]

[You have completed the Braised Pork Ribs!]

[Extreme Trance. It is a dish that has your 'Excitement', 'Will to Eat Something Delicious', and 'Realization to Return to Your Roots' poured into it!]

[Due to the effects of Extreme Trance, the buff effect has improved greatly.]

[You have cooked using Ravier's Bizarre Cauldron.]

[The buffed dish's effects will increase by 15%.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[All stats...]

[All skills...]

[Physical Attack Power...]

[HP and MP...]

[Skill...]

The notifications rang constantly in Minhyuk's ears. However, they were completely ignored, as his eyes were focused on the steaming braised pork ribs in front of him.

The steaming, well-seasoned braised pork ribs had been boiled down well in the Bizarre Cauldron. The meat looked extremely tender, and the potatoes right next to the meat looked like they had soaked up the sauce well. Minhyuk could not help but swallow back his saliva just by looking at it.

'The most delicious braised pork ribs in the world.'

Yes, this was the braised pork ribs that he made, with only the thought of making it the most delicious. However, unlike Minhyuk's happy and delighted smile, the troops of the Rothschild Kingdom were very disappointed.

'In the end, a God-grade dish did not appear.'

'What could the dish's grade be?'

When a God-grade item or dish was created, a pillar of light would fall down from the sky. Seeing that no pillar of light came to be, it was safe to say that Minhyuk failed to make a God-grade dish.

‘Even if he made a legendary-grade dish, will it even have effects that can reverse the tides of this challenge?’

Lesso believed that they needed at least a God-grade dish to survive safely inside the Tomb of the Kings. Right then, at that moment, they received worse news.

[All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have awakened!]

[All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have started to summon their armies!]

[All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have started to charge and eliminate the intruders!]

[Challengers must survive for thirty minutes from the attacks of all of the kings.]

[You will be able to receive rewards after surviving for thirty minutes.]

[However, if you succeed in defeating all of the kings, you will receive a special reward!]

“...!”

The Rothschild Kingdom’s troops became nervous about this unexpected turn of events. Based on what they had experienced so far, the Tomb of the Kings only allowed them to encounter the soldiers and knights of several outstanding kingdoms. They had not yet encountered and fought with a king directly. However, from the notifications, all of the kings were now charging toward them. They would even arrive with all their troops.

‘Shit...’ Lesso’s expression turned ugly. ‘If we succeed in defeating all of the kings, then we will receive a special reward?’

That was absolutely impossible. It was already a miracle if they could survive for thirty minutes, how would such a feat be possible? Amidst all that, Minhyuk activated his skill.

[Everyone’s Happiness.]

[One bowl of dish has turned into ten.]

Minhyuk’s Everyone’s Happiness could feed a total of ten people. One bowl was for himself, while the rest was for Calauhel, Lesso and the other high rankers.

“What is the grade of the dish?”

“Legendary grade,” Minhyuk answered Lesso’s question bluntly and briefly.

It was something that Lesso had expected, but he still felt the disappointment growing in him. Nevertheless, Lesso knew that he had to eat this meal quickly so he could increase the chances of their survival.

“Everyone, please hang in there while we eat this meal.”

“We understand.”

The royal army answered with firm determination when they heard Lesso’s orders.

Lesso, who was about to eat his food, suddenly thought of looking at Minhyuk.

“...”

He was left completely speechless. It was because Minhyuk was smiling happily at the braised pork ribs in front of him as though he had not a care in the world.

There was a bright smile blooming on Minhyuk’s face as he looked at the braised pork ribs served in an earthen pot in front of him. There was also a bowl of warm rice and a variety of side dishes placed around the earthen pot.

‘The braised pork ribs are enough for a meal. But it’s better to eat it like this. It’s more yummy this way.’

Minhyuk liked to eat his meals properly, even if he was only going to be able to eat them once. So, he pulled out a bowl of boiling doenjang jjigae, seaweed, and a serving of japchae from his inventory and set it on the table.

After he finished the set up, he first grabbed a piece of braised pork ribs, bit on the meat and pulled the bone away. The braised pork ribs, which had been cooked well through varying heat inside the cauldron, easily gave way and separated from the bones.

Munch—

The moment he chewed the meat, the savory and sweet flavor of the meat spread gently in his mouth.

“Wow, it’s melting. It’s melting.”

These were the only words that Minhyuk could use to describe the sensation in his mouth. Minhyuk quickly grabbed a pork rib in each hand and tore it apart with his teeth.

After that, he grabbed his spoon and scooped up a mouthful of steaming rice in his mouth. The warm, well-cooked rice tasted sweet and delightful. Then, he immediately grabbed some braised pork meat and crammed it together with the rice in his mouth.

“Kgghhk! This is amazing! Amazing!”

This time, he turned his attention to the potatoes. He placed the fluffy and well-seasoned potatoes on top of his rice and sprinkled a few spoonfuls of the braised pork ribs’ sauce on top. Then, he crushed the potatoes and mixed them together with the sauce and the rice. He felt nothing but awe when he placed the mix of rice, potatoes and sauce in his mouth.

Then, he took a sip of the spicy and savory doenjang jjigae.

“Wahahahaha!”

Shouts of awe and admiration came out of Minhyuk’s mouth. The braised pork ribs, which had achieved the Easter Egg: The World’s Most Delicious Dish, was truly the best braised pork ribs that Minhyuk had ever tasted in his life.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—

Loud footsteps began to ring and resonate in the area as Minhyuk ate his meal happily.

Special Players Management Team.

Lee Minhwa immediately went to report to Team Leader Park Minggyu after she saw the notifications on the monitor. “Team Leader! All of the kings inside the Tomb of the Kings have awakened!”

“What?” Team Leader Park rushed to look at the monitor. “No way. Did Eight Pillars Aegaeon get temporarily awakened?”

Lee Minhwa nodded, which made Park Minggyu’s expression turn somber. The Tomb of the Kings was a place that should not have been explored yet. However, the players had always moved beyond the expectations of the operators of Joy Co. Ltd.

The release of the opponents inside the Tomb of the Kings should have been a sequential process. However, while that was the case, the current level of players could not handle the level of difficulty of the tomb, not to mention if only one or two kings and their troops appeared. But right now, all of them had appeared.

“Thirty minutes. To be honest... I think it’s impossible for them to survive there for thirty minutes.”

“But... If they can endure for that long, then they would be able to obtain huge rewards, no?”

That was right. Those who would be able to endure and hold on until the end of that half hour would be able to receive enormous rewards. Of course, there were conditions.

“Only those that have given up on the King Above Kings’ class will be able to receive a more special reward.”

“...Player Minhyuk has given up on the King Above Kings’ class.”

Team Leader Park’s worries had now turned into reality. Actually, Park Minggyu was aware that Minhyuk did not really need the King Above Kings. He already guessed that he would give it up because of that.

“The one that gives up on the King Above Kings and the one that destroys and tramples on all of the kings instead of just holding on and enduring will be able to receive the special power of one of the Eight Pillars.”

That was not all.

“They will also be able to get the special army of the God of All Kings Aegaeon.”

There was one important fact that one had to know.

“It will be impossible even if Player Minhyuk is present there.”

Lee Minhwa shook her head and said, “I wouldn’t be so sure about that.”

“Why?”

“Player Minhyuk has cooked a meal.”

“...”

Player Minhyuk’s dishes had always exceeded expectations, not to mention if it were a God-grade dish.

“Is it God-grade?”

“No. It’s a Legendary grade.”

“So, it is.”

‘It’s just a legendary grade dish then?’

If so, its effects would not be enough to allow the Rothschild Kingdom’s army to pull their foot off of the grave.

Lee Minhwa, who looked at the relief that flashed across Team Leader Park’s face, said, “But there’s a problem.”

“What is it again?”

“The legendary grade dish is somewhat special.”

The ten people, including Minhyuk, hurriedly ate their meals as the footsteps echoed louder and louder inside the Tomb of the Kings.

[The mages of the best Mage Kingdom, Abannon, have appeared!]

[Mage King Imperio has appeared!]

[Mage King Imperio. Level 595.]

[Mages. Level 497.]

[The knights of the Kenperoe Kingdom, the kingdom known for their outstanding sword masters, have appeared!]

[Sword King Carman has appeared!]

[Sword King Carman. Level 601.]

[Knights. Level 511.]

[The elite soldiers raised by the Tyrant have appeared...]

[The archers protected by the God of Archery have appeared...]

The notifications rang constantly in their ears. The surviving troops of the Rothschild Kingdom immediately took a step forward and protected those that were eating behind them.

It sounded like there were a hundred people, maybe even a thousand people. Or perhaps there were five thousand or more? Powerful and strong enemies constantly appeared until their numbers could not be predicted anymore.

“Hold on for just a bit longer!!!” Calauhel ordered them. He hoped that they would be able to endure until they finished eating.

However, the morale of the players, NPC soldiers, and even the mercenaries had dropped to an all-time low after seeing the extremely high level of the opponents that appeared in front of them.

‘This is the true appearance of the Tomb of the Kings.’

‘Can we even last for thirty minutes?’

Thirty minutes? It looked like they would only last for five minutes.

“Until the end!!!” However, Ruman, the proud knight commander of the Rothschilde Kingdom, held his sword tightly and shouted. He would fight until his death.

There were only around 1,000 troops left in the Rothschilde Kingdom’s army. On the other hand, more than ten kings, whose levels averaged at Level 600, had made their appearance, together with 10,000 of their soldiers, whose levels averaged at Level 500.

Even so, Ruman charged forward. At that moment, Mage King Imperio’s staff burst into a bright light and triggered dozens of magic in quick succession.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—!

The mages immediately followed after him and sent attacks toward the soldiers of the Rothschilde Kingdom. The few remaining mages and tankers of the Rothschilde Kingdom hurriedly used their shield magic and physical shields to ward off the attacks.

Immediately after that, Sword King Carman jumped in the ranks of the Rothschilde Kingdom’s army.

Slash, slash, slash, slash—

One swing of his sword and several soldiers were cut down. That was not all. The archers protected by the God of Archery sent a rain of arrows in the sky that pierced the bodies of the soldiers accurately with their 100% accuracy rate.

Lesso watched the knights and soldiers charging forward despite the arrows that pierced through their bodies. He could tell that they were squeezing the last of their strength to fight. However, with just one swing from Sword King Carman’s sword, they succumbed to their deaths.

“...”

Lesso was also eating braised pork ribs. However, he just could not swallow it down.

‘Legendary grade...’

It was definitely an amazing dish. However, Food God Minhyuk had asked them for quite a lot of things earlier while declaring that he could save everyone here with great confidence. Of course, the situation took a turn for the worse, and the reality in front of them was terrifying. Their allies and

comrades were fighting desperately and resisting with all their might, yet they could only die a helpless and vain death. Yet, Minhyuk merely brought forth a mere legendary dish?

‘Did he think that we could beat them with just a legendary-grade dish?’

It was absolutely impossible, ridiculous even. It would be better for them to put down their chopsticks, stop eating their meals, and fight fiercely alongside their comrades.

“Food God!!! What the hell is wrong with you, huh?! Looking so happy and delighted there?!!!”

“...”

“Are you telling us to eat this meal when the situation is already like this?!!!”

Just like Calahuel, Lesso had also realized the importance of NPCs. The man in front of him had spoken confidently as if he could save them. That was why he could not help but look at him in resentment when people kept on dying.

“Legendary? What the f*ck?! Yes, it’s a great dish, but do you think that a dish at that level can save us and give His Majesty Calauhel the power to overcome all of those kings, huh?!!!”

Lesso slowly stood up from his seat. He would rather fight beside them until the very end than put his bet on this dish. He was aware that he would not be able to defeat even a single of the kings over there even though he was among the top high rankers. However, he’d rather die fighting until the very end.

However, Minhyuk grabbed Lesso, who was about to jump into the fray, by the collar and said, “Hey, you bastard. You’ve been annoying me since earlier. “

“...?”

Lesso was taken aback when Minhyuk’s dignity and majesty as a king suddenly erupted violently. Just a few moments earlier, the man had been showing a pure and happy smile as he cooked and ate his dish. But now, he was met with an overwhelming charisma that exploded without warning. Then, Minhyuk slapped Lesso.

Smaaaaaack—

“Keok?!” Lesso groaned, his hand reaching out to cover his face as he was sent flying back from the force of the slap.

“I did not like your attitude from the very beginning.”

Minhyuk truly did not like Lesso, who had been arguing about a lot of things since earlier. Of course, Lesso also hated Minhyuk, thinking that he was trying to mislead them with his lies.

“F*cking bastard. Open those eyes and look carefully.”

“...?”

Lesso was confused. Then, he saw Calauhel step forward after eating his meal. There was also a warm and happy smile directed toward Minhyuk on his face. Then, an unbelievable set of notifications rang in his ears.

[Your King, Calauhel, has transcended the limits of a human being!]

[...Calauhel...limits of a human being!]

[...Calauhel...limits of a human being!]

While the notifications rang constantly in his ears, he saw a black stream of energy flow out of Calauhel's body. This was obviously the effect of the dish that he ate. Then, Calauhel pointed his sword toward Sword King Carman.

“The One Who Yields.”

The One Who Yields was one of Calauhel's skills that could send out a beam of light that would pierce through his opponents. The light would explode and devour an entire area with a radius of ten meters.

Lesso still shook his head. He knew that Calauhel's 'The One Who Yields' would not work on the Sword King Carman.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

However, a beam of light that was several times thicker than usual shot out from Calauhel's sword toward Sword King Carman. The Sword King hurriedly swung his sword and tried to slash the attack apart. Alas, Calauhel's skill was faster. It pierced through the Sword King's body and exploded.

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

The explosion engulfed an area with a 50-meter radius and devoured around 500 enemy troops all at once.

“Gulp.”

Lesso could not understand what was happening for a moment. What did Calauhel do for him to become like that? The only thing that he did was to eat the dish given to them. But how could this happen after eating a mere dish? Lesso, who caught sight of Minhyuk's gaze, hurriedly rushed to his braised pork ribs and began to cram the few remaining pieces of ribs in his mouth.

As he finished his meal, his guild members grew stronger one after another and even transcended the limits of a human being. Levar, the Rothschilde Kingdom's greatest mage, flew to the sky after finishing his meal and began to shoot magic toward the Mage King.

“Urk...”

Surprisingly enough, the one that fell and collapsed on the ground was the Mage King. Mage Levar was only at Level 485 and had a hundred-level difference with the Mage King.

Seeing this, Lesso could not help but hurriedly cram the last piece of the braised pork ribs in his mouth. Then, the notifications rang in his ears.

[You have eaten the Braised Pork Ribs.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[Due to the effects of the Bizarre Cauldron, the buff effects have increased by 15%.]

[The Easter Egg ‘Most Delicious Dish in the World’ has increased the buff effects by 20%.]

[Due to the effects of Extreme Trance, the buff effects have increased by 15%.]

[All of your stats have increased by 34%.]

[All of your skills’ level has increased by +3.]

[Your physical and magical attack have increased by 22%.]

[Your physical and magical defenses have increased by 40%.]

[Your resistance against abnormal status has increased by 50%.]

[Your HP and MP has returned to 100%.]

[Your skill cooldown has been reset.]

[The effect ‘black stream of energy’ has been activated.]

Lesso had seen the power of a God-grade buffed dish once on the internet. This legendary-grade dish did not pale in comparison to the effects of that dish.

Then, Minhyuk stood in front of him and said, “You better fix that attitude. Understand?”

Only then did Lesso realize that whatever the dish may be, whether it was legendary grade or God-grade, as long as it passed by Minhyuk’s hands, its effects would be amazing.

Lesso answered politely, “...Yes. I understand.”

Chapter 790

‘I’ll never show such an attitude toward the Food God ever again,’ Lesso made such a vow as he felt the surge of power that flowed through his body from the buff effects that he received.

‘How is this even possible?’

The effects of Minhyuk’s buffed dish were enough to give Level 500 players a strength that could rival those at Level 650. What was even more surprising was that a ‘legendary’ grade dish was exerting the power of a ‘god’ grade dish.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—!

Lesso triggered his special skill, ‘Crevice’s Sword.’ It was a skill that could normally engulf an area of a 15-meter radius and create a huge crevice on the ground where magma would come pouring out.

[Crevice’s Sword]

[Magma with an additional 6,500% damage will spurt out of the crevice within a 36-meter radius area.]

[The enemies' armor that make contact with the magma will immediately corrode. An additional 600% damage per second will be dealt to the enemies.]

The skill was supposed to only deal an additional 4,000% damage from the initial spurt of magma and 150% damage per second once it corroded the enemies' armor and defenses. On top of that, these additional % damages were usually related to one's basic attack damage.

Lesso was currently the most excited out of everyone present in this tomb. This was because the level of his power had reached a point where his enemies were melting down.

“Ha... Hahahahahaha... Hahahahahahaha!”

It was exhilarating. Lesso felt like he could go toe to toe with Alexander the way he was right now. In fact, he felt like he could become the best ranker in the world. However, Lesso immediately realized that it was nothing but useless arrogance.

[The first attack of the kings of the Tomb of the Kings will continue!]

[Remaining Time: 24 minutes 53 seconds.]

[You will receive special rewards if you can wipe out the kings of the Tomb of the Kings and their troops quickly.]

[You have wiped out the kings of the Tomb of the Kings and their troops!]

[Your EXP Acquisition Rate has increased by 1.5x.]

[A special reward will be given to the player with the highest contribution inside the Tomb of the Kings.]

[You have acquired 2,000 platinum.]

[You have gained +2 in all of your stats.]

[You are the player with the highest contribution.]

[You have wiped out the Magic Kingdom Abbanon's Mages.]

[You are a king of a nation.]

[You have acquired 200 Nurturing Parchments that can help your kingdom's mages to grow one class higher.]

[You have randomly acquired 137 of the 4th~6th Class Magic Books from the Abbanon's Magic Kingdom.]

If they could wipe them out faster, then they would be able to receive greater rewards. Minhyuk was also aware that there were precious ingredients, which the kings had enjoyed in their lifetimes, hidden within the Tomb of the Kings.

Minhyuk jumped out and left Lesso behind. He had been saving his skills as much as possible ever since he entered the Tomb of the Kings. This was because he still did not know about what lay ahead of him inside this tomb. But now, all of the kings were now charging toward them at one go. There was no need for him to save his strength any longer.

“Summon Beanie.”

“Oiiiiink!”

Beanie held a black kitchen knife in his paws and wore a white cape carrying the ‘Beyond the Heavens’ symbol’, as he appeared in front of Minhyuk with a smirk on his face.

“Oink! Oink, oink. Oiiiiiiiink! (It’s been a long time since you called for me, bastard master! Oiiiiink!)”

Minhyuk smiled faintly as he stood with Beanie at the forefront, facing over 10,000 of the charging troops that marched with their kings. Their levels all exceeded Level 570. However, Minhyuk had become stronger after eating the ‘legendary’ grade dish that was comparable to a ‘god’ grade dish in terms of buff effects.

Minhyuk was currently at Level 602. At that level, he would be able to obtain strength that was at least at Level 700 if he ate a god-grade dish.

“Overlord’s Technique.”

Crackleeeee—!

A blazing black flame erupted and covered his sword.

“Oiiiiiiiiiiiiink!!!”

Beanie, who was now standing right next to him, immediately cast Overlord’s Technique and swung his sword which was also covered with blazing black flames, together with Minhyuk.

Crackleeeeeeee—!

After eating the buffed dish, the Overlord’s Technique’s level had increased by +2 and now covered an area with a 100-meter radius. On top of that, Beanie also released a similar Overlord’s Technique, which instantly doubled the area.

Crackleeeee—

The thousands of troops that were charging toward Minhyuk and Beanie and blocking their path were immediately sent flying back by the Overlord’s Technique that overturned the entire area of 200 meter radius.

[You have wiped out the kings in the Tomb of the Kings and their troops at an incredible speed!]

[The speed of the enemy troops’ advance cannot catch up with the speed of being wiped out!]

[You will be given a special reward.]

[You have gained 3,000 platinum.]

[You have acquired +5 to all of your stats...]

The Rothschild Kingdom’s army and Calauhel were all very shocked, especially those that had eaten the same legendary grade dish that Minhyuk had eaten. They clearly felt their limits. They felt very frustrated after seeing Minhyuk and realizing that they could not even reach his ankles. Then, at that moment, a set of chilling notifications rang out.

[Eight Pillar Aegaeon's power has been activated!]

[Aegaeon is gathering all of the kings.]

[The gathered kings have become 20% stronger with Aegaeon's blessings.]

[With Aegaeon's blessings, the gathered kings have received a 30% increase in their physical and magical defenses.]

[There are a total of 300 kings gathered together.]

[The gathered kings have recognized the current era's two strong kings.]

[They are pointing their swords only at the two kings.]

[The kings from the past want to test two great kings who have succeeded them.]

Flash, flash, flash, flash, flash, flash—

Hundreds of bright lights burst out in quick succession. At that moment, all of the troops were swept away while Minhyuk and Calauhel were dragged forward by Aegaeon's power.

“Keheuuuuup!”

“Urk...!”

Hundreds of kings surrounded and stared at the two of them. These proud and majestic kings were all curious about the kings of the current era and their strength. The questions began.

“Our strength...”

“Do you have the qualifications?”

“Do you have them?”

Calauhel gulped dryly. Aegaeon had increased these kings' level by a hundred. These kings were asking them such questions. At the same time, Calauhel felt thrilled.

‘If I... If I can take the test together with Food God Minhyuk...’

Calauhel realized that Food God Minhyuk stood at a higher place than him and was much greater than him. He was an insignificant existence when compared to Minhyuk.

But then, Minhyuk put his hands on his shoulder and said, “Become the King Above Kings.”

Today, Minhyuk noticed that the world's richest man, Calauhel, would become Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's strong and reliable ally. That was why he believed that it would be better if this new reliable ally would have the new class ‘King Above Kings.’

Calauhel looked at Minhyuk and thought, ‘Even though he might feel bad that he would have to be recognized together with someone like me...’

However, the man in front of him gave him strength and confidence.

“I love you, friend.”

“...”

Calauhel, who never had a real friend in his life, wanted to make a genuine friend. That was why he said those words. However, his method was a bit clumsy and cringy, to the point that it made Minhyuk feel this strange sense of discomfort.

Meanwhile, the kings opened their mouths again.

“Can you carry our powers?”

“This era’s strong kings.”

“We will test your qualifications.”

There was arrogance in the eyes of these kings, as well as some curiosity toward the strong kings of the current era.

Minhyuk’s lips twisted into a smirk. “Shut up and just come at us quickly.”

The arrogant and great king’s faces turned ugly when they heard Minhyuk’s impudent remarks.

[One of the Eight Pillars, Aegaeon, is looking at you with interest.]

The 500 kings started attacking the two at the same time. The Rothschild Kingdom’s army was unable to intervene in this battle because Aegaeon’s power was preventing them from interfering with their battle.

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

Minhyuk swiftly evaded the onslaught of attacks and the enemies that were chasing after him with his Like the Wind. Then, he kicked strongly and soared through the air, cutting down the kings that were blocking his path in the air.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—!

“Keuaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaack!”

He stepped on the bodies of the falling kings to catapult himself higher, all the while allowing the attacks to fall on his body. Thanks to the activation of the Steel Skin, his physical and magical defense had tripled.

“Sword of Absolute Death.”

Minhyuk, with his dark hair fluttering with the wind, glared sharply at the kings. He was very upset when he heard them talk about testing themselves over and over again.

[Hundreds of lightning swords with additional 7,000% attack will fall down from the sky and hit all of the enemies within a 20 meter radius with a 100% success rate.]

[Immediately after the first attack, the hundreds of lightning swords with 2,000% additional attack will strike down all of the enemies within a 30-meter radius.]

[Anyone who received a direct attack from the lightning sword will fall into a four-second stunned state.]

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

All of the kings within the 20-meter radius area were struck with lightning swords that carried an additional 7,000% attack.

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

Their screams rang rampant as hundreds of lightning swords fell from the sky one after another.

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

Those who had been directly hit by the lightning sword also fell into a stunned state. Minhyuk did not stop there. He quickly dashed forward the moment his feet landed on the ground.

“Stormy.”

A sword made of storms was summoned right beside the running Minhyuk and shot toward the kings. Just like that, blood spurted out from the bodies of the kings.

‘Crazy. Food God Minhyuk is really crazy.’

‘Goodness...

The royal army was left slack-jawed when they saw Minhyuk’s performance. Of course, they were also admiring Calauhel.

[The Destroyer’s Dance.]

Calauhel triggered his secret skill, the Destroyer’s Dance. It could create hundreds of Destruction Energy with every step that he made and stab his enemies, the kings, as they danced around him.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

Calauhel felt like he had nothing to fear now.

‘My precious friend is right here with me, what is there for me to fear?’

He completely entrusted his back to Minhyuk. Then, he thought, ‘A way for my Rothschild Kingdom to get back up on its feet and become stronger...’

It had seemed like it was impossible.

‘I should just stay with him.’

Stab— Stab, stab, stab—

Calauhel dashed forward and cut down the kings one after another.

The pace at which they cut down the number of kings had become faster. Then, Minhyuk ran away from the kings. Of course, the kings started to chase after him. However, he took this opportunity to jump into the middle of their ranks.

Minhyuk grinned. He had the skill ‘Save’, which allowed him to save a skill and use it once without it being affected by the cooldown time.

“Sword of Absolute Death.”

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

Once again, he triggered the Sword of Absolute Death and sent hundreds of lightning swords with an additional 7,000% attack, raining down on the kings, and wiping them out easily.

At the same time, Calauhel cut down the last king.

Blink—

[You have wiped out all of the kings of the Tomb of the Kings!]

[The two kings have received the recognition and acknowledgement of the Tomb of the Kings.]

[The owner of the Tomb of the Kings, Aegaeon, has appeared.]

A bright light flashed as a strange, powerful force wrapped around Minhyuk's body. Then, the space that he was standing on suddenly changed.

The Eight Pillars. They were legendary characters who supported and maintained the world of Athenae. They were beings that even the Absolute Gods would not dare fight against.

Aegaeon, one of the Eight Pillars, was an existence that was comparable to a king above kings. The Tomb of the Kings was just one among the many possessions that he had.

If Goddess Athenae was the existence that maintained and kept the balance of the world, then Aegaeon was the existence that wanted the world to 'not exist.' Among Aegaeon's power, there existed a power called 'gluttony.' It allowed him to devour his opponents which made him, who harbored such thoughts and ideals, extremely dangerous.

That was why Athenae used all of her powers to seal Aegaeon. However, Aegaeon was a vicious and shrewd being. Knowing that he would be sealed, he separated himself into fragments and scattered them all over the world. Then, he waited.

Right now, Aegaeon wanted one man. The same man who overcame the hurdles presented by the hundreds of kings in the Tomb of the Kings. He sat on his black throne and watched as the man appeared in front of him in a flash of light.

The man had many faces. He showed a bright and innocent smile when eating, and a wild, ferocious face, fiercer than any wild beast, when he was fighting.

[Aegaeon's Dignity has been triggered.]

[Aegaeon's Dignity can force anyone to their knees and take away their will to fight!]

Aegaeon, with his black hair strewn all over his face, looked at the man with an expressionless face and said, "Kneel."

The power that he used was something that even the gods could not fight against. There was no god that would be able to stand in front of his dignity.

Rumbleeeeeeeeeee—

The heavens and the earth shook as the word 'Kneel' rang in the area, and a tremendous amount of pressure weighed down on the human king in front of Aegaeon.

"Who the f*ck are you to tell me to kneel?"

[The Unyielding One has been triggered.]

[The Candidate for the Eight Pillars does not give in to anyone!]

The knees of the man in front of Aegaeon did not fold.

Meanwhile, contrary to his confident and arrogant words, Minhyuk was actually very nervous. This was his first time encountering such a strong pressure in Athenae. The pressure was leagues beyond the one that he felt when he faced the Corrupted God, one of the Six Monster Gods Gaerna, and the other powerful beings that he had faced before.

Even so, Minhyuk did not kneel. In fact, he even took a step towards Aegaeon.

Thud, thud—

“You kneel.”

“...”

“Worship.”

The Earth King’s Authority, ‘Worship’ was triggered. After the battle against over 300 kings, the Earth King’s Mana had reached 100%. According to the description of the Earth King’s Authority ‘Worship’, it could force anyone to kneel once the Earth King’s Mana had been filled to 100%.

At that moment, Aegaeon’s expression changed.

Thuuuuuuuuud—

Something invisible that felt like they were tree roots began to wrap around Aegaeon’s body as a powerful pressure began to press down on himself and drag him down from his throne.

‘What...?!’

Aegaeon was very shocked. He had never knelt down before, even in the presence of Athenae.

Thud, thud—

A drop of sweat fell down Aegaeon’s forehead as the man continued to take huge strides forward.

Flaaaaaaaash—

Aegaeon could ignore the forced kneel status.

Swoosh—

The power of Worship slowly disappeared. However, Minhyuk was already running with his sword. Minhyuk was quick-witted. He could tell that Aegaeon was not looking at him favorably and would try to kill him.

Dash, dash, dash—

Aegaeon immediately jumped from his seat when he saw Minhyuk dash forward. The moment Minhyuk swung his sword, Aegaeon triggered a skill that no one could resist and forced Minhyuk’s consciousness to turn black.

“...”

Only after that did Aegaeon realize that the sword that Minhyuk swung stopped just right next to his neck.