

Gourmet 851

Chapter 851

Even before the Beyond the Heavens Empire was established, Minhyuk was already aware that the most devoted person to the nation was Haze. If he knew, then the people and the soldiers would also know.

The people who saw her whispered about how Haze studied every single day, trying to learn how to enable the people to live and prosper, to the point that she would only sleep two hours to four hours a day.

The priest, who checked up on her, whispered about the time when she collapsed from overworking. When she had woken up, she immediately stood up while saying, '*I have work to do.*'

The fruit store owner whispered about how she would peel and cut a single fruit to small pieces to save money despite being able to secure more profits for the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

Several whispers reached hundreds to tens of thousands of ears, eventually changing their view of Haze. Everyone learned of Haze's hard work. Then when a boy pointed his finger at her...

"Mom, look. It's Haze Who Cried Wolf."

"This rascal! You can't say that. She's not the one who cried wolf. She's the most respected figure in our empire."

The people had already fallen in love with her. They knew that she represented the Beyond the Heavens Empire. They knew that she had continued to devote herself to them despite the fact that they had pointed fingers at her and criticized her. They knew that she continued to work hard for their sake, despite the overwhelming physical and mental fatigue that she had to endure.

So, perhaps, the notifications that appeared in front of Minhyuk were the most appropriate notifications.

[Your vassal Haze has gone beyond the limits of a human and has become a god.]

[She was a woman that lied. However, all her lies were filled with 'devotion'.]

[The God of Devotion has been born to the world.]

[You are the Battle God's Descendant and the Food God. You can now include Haze in the Food God Swords.]

[You can only choose a total of thirty Food God Swords. The thirty Food God Swords will represent and prove your prowess and majesty.]

Minhyuk had once told Haze about how he could pick the *Food God Swords*. The Food God Swords could experience a 10% increase in growth rate and a 3% increase in all stats. These Food God Swords would be the face of the empire. They were just like the Luvien Empire's Swords of the Gods.

When Haze heard that, she said...

–You have to consider this carefully, Your Majesty. They will be the pillars of the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

However, Minhyuk did not hesitate.

[You have chosen the first member of the Food God Swords!]

[You have chosen God of Devotion Haze as one of the Food God Swords!]

[Prime Minister Haze has become the first Food God Sword!]

“...Your Majesty, didn’t I tell you? The Food God Swords will represent the Beyond the Heavens Empire,” Haze said, black blood dripping down her chin.

However, Minhyuk just held her hands gently. Fortunately, the poison that was ravaging her body was slowly being driven away the moment she became a god. After all, gods had a body that could not be damaged or killed by some light poison.

Flaaaaaaash–

Then, at that moment, a pillar of light fell down from the sky and enveloped Haze. Just like that, her vitality and life was fully restored. She slowly stood up as the notifications continued to ring in her ears.

[Your total HP and MP have increased significantly.]

[Your defense has increased significantly.]

[Your attack has increased significantly.]

[The God of Devotion’s skills has been revealed.]

[Special stats: Dazzle (DAZ) and Faith (FTH) have been created.]

[You have gained +10,000 DAZ.]

[You have gained +10,000 FTH.]

Amidst the notifications, a voice rang in Haze’s ears.

[The God of Devotion is looking at you with a smile!]

[The God of Devotion says that you’re the only one that can inherit his position!]

[The God of Devotion wants you to be loved!]

Everyone viewed the God of Fraud in an unfavorable light, especially since his name contained the word *Fraud*. However, the real name behind it carried majesty, grace and nobility.

“Beyond the Heavens Emperor! You have extorted us through your prime minister!”

The kings and emperors looked embarrassed as they stared at the one million white platinum coins that littered the ground. An emperor had come here for the sake of one mere subordinate. However, they also thought that it was a good thing.

“Kneel down in front of us right now! Apologize for what you have done!”

They all knew that they could not overpower Food God Minhyuk right here and now. However, if they could force Minhyuk to apologize to them right now, then that would mean that he would admit to ordering Haze to extort them.

However, Minhyuk was a king that knew his subordinates well. He knew the type of woman Haze was. She would definitely not give them the answer that they wanted.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Minhyuk blinked, his palms clenching into a fist. These people had kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured and tried to kill his precious subordinate.

“That’s funny, I have never done anything that you are accusing me of. More importantly...”

A cold glint appeared in Minhyuk’s eyes as he looked at the kings and emperors. Murderous intent flashed in his eyes and completely overwhelmed these treacherous kings and emperors. Some of them might be more powerful than the rest. However, in front of Minhyuk, who had sealed one of the Great Demon and had killed one of the Six Monster Gods, they were nothing. If Minhyuk went crazy here, then they would not be able to stop him.

“How should you pay for the crime of harming my subordinate?”

“...Hiiiiik!”

“How dare you accuse us! Shameless!”

At that moment, the powerhouses of the different empires and kingdoms began to flock in right after Minhyuk appeared. Minhyuk could tell that the situation was taking an unusual turn. He desperately wanted to grab these stupid kings and emperors by the collar and throw them on the ground. However, if he did that, then they would truly go to war.

‘I have to do something, but I can’t figure out what to do.’

However, unlike Minhyuk, Haze seemed to have figured out a way for them to get through this situation.

“Do all of the kings and emperors here want to wage war with the Beyond the Heavens Empire?”

The kings and emperors smiled widely when they heard Haze’s question.

“If the need arises.”

At that moment, Haze triggered one of the skills that she received after becoming the God of Devotion.

[You have triggered the skill: Inducement!]

Passive Skill

•*You can induce and lead the most influential person among those that you are conversing with to say what you want to hear with your words.*

•*They will follow your words as if they are possessed, the direction of the conversation will depend on how you communicate and speak with them.*

The most influential person among the emperors and kings present was Elise, the emperor of the Aplath Empire.

‘I really want to say something.’

Elise felt strange. There was a strong urge to say words right now, it was like his mouth was tickling and he had to say it so badly. In the end, he could not overcome the ticklish sensation in his mouth. He opened his mouth and said, “Do you think your Beyond the Heavens Empire can handle us, huh? If you take out your empire’s prominent talents then your military force is nothing but rubbish.”

[Inducement has been successful!]

[Please lead the conversation in the direction that you want.]

It was very important to be the one to lead the flow of the conversation.

“So, Your Majesty is saying that our empire is nothing but a weak empire without our talents?”

“Am I wrong? What else is left if they are not in the picture?”

To some extent, those words rang true. The main reason why the other empires and kingdom could not invade the Beyond the Heavens Empire was because Ben and Brod lived there.

[You have triggered the skill: Agreement.]

[They will agree with Emperor Elise’s words.]

With Inducement, Haze could lead the conversation and make them agree with what she wanted. However, the skill: Agreement would only be triggered if there were others around.

Just like that, the other kings and emperors nodded.

“Beyond the Heavens Empire is a shabby and useless nation, there’s nothing left to see there.”

“Just what the hell does the Beyond the Heavens Empire think it can do?”

“It’s quite ridiculous to completely rely on and believe your talented people just so you can play around.”

“We can even push back the Beyond the Heavens Empire right here and now!”

The kings and emperors voiced their agreement to Emperor Elise’s words.

Then, Haze asked, “Let’s all be honest here. All you want to do is to get your talents back, no? That is why you are threatening me and His Majesty.”

"Ahem!"

"Ahem, ahem!"

"Hmmm..."

That was the truth. If the Beyond the Heavens Empire returned their talents right here and now, then they would all shut their mouths and return to their own empires and kingdoms. No, to be honest, they would even be willing to apologize.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk looked at Haze and thought, *'That's surprising.'*

They were in a situation where all of the kings and emperors present were arrogant and confident, yet they were all being forced to go along with Haze's words, which resulted in this strange yet gentle flow of conversation.

'Is this the power of the God of Devotion?'

Anticipation slowly built up within Minhyuk as he continued to watch Haze.

"So? Are you going to give them back?"

"Are you going to return our talents?"

The moment those questions were uttered, another skill was triggered.

[God's Negotiation has been triggered!]

It was a skill that would assist Haze into leading the negotiations in their favor. She would just be able to dazzle and seduce them into whatever result she wanted the negotiation to have.

"Sure, we can give them back."

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

The faces of the kings and emperors all turned bright. Would they be able to get the talents that they have lost back? There was nothing better than that.

"However, we just can't return them to you like that. We have our own conditions."

However, Haze would never make an offer that would not bring her profits. All of the kings and emperors present here had already suffered greatly from Haze's hands, but they found themselves hooked on her words.

'Why do I want to hear those conditions?'

'If only I can get them back then...'

'I can bring them back. I can take them back to my empire!'

The greed in their hearts started to boil over.

“A hundred thousand platinum per talent. Ah, each of Your Majesties also has to give one *Authority Herb* to us. After all, you have humiliated our Beyond the Heavens Empire here.” Haze’s expression grew stern. “You even looked down on our Beyond the Heavens Empire, daring to call it shabby and useless.”

The kings and emperors all turned silent. They did not dare to refute Haze’s words. After all, they all thought that they would be able to get their talents back soon.

“You even dare to say that our troops are nothing but rubbish. Then, put forward those powerful soldiers that you are proud of. If any of your soldiers can win against the people that His Majesty had summoned, then we will give you your talent back. Of course, they are free to choose whoever they want to fight amongst those that His Majesty had summoned. However, if they lose, then you will have to pay us a hundred thousand platinum.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

In other words, she wanted them to compete against the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

“Of course, those that we will summon would not include our Beyond the Heavens Empire’s Spear God Ben, Brod, Elpis or any other talents that you tried to recruit.”

Greed immediately filled the eyes of the emperors and kings.

[The skill: God’s Negotiation is making their hearts waver!]

All of them believed that the Beyond the Heavens Empire was nothing without those aforementioned talents. Besides, their side could even choose their opponents. The conditions were amazing.

“And these terms for our negotiations will only be in effect for four minutes.”

Minhyuk, who listened quietly to Haze’s words, could see where she was going with this.

“Let me say it again, these terms would only be in effect for four minutes.”

[Through God’s Negotiation, those who are listening to you will start to feel nervous and become panicked!]

“So, bring forward your chosen fighters from your empires and kingdoms. We will only summon twenty soldiers on our side. If the subordinates of Your Majesties could win against these twenty soldiers, then we will return your talents.”

Of course, Haze did not forget to emphasize the risk involved.

“Again, if your chosen fighters lose, then your talents will not be returned and you will have to pay us a hundred thousand platinum and one *Authority Herb*.”

The Authority Herb was a mysterious herb that could increase the CHA of the kings and emperors. These kings and emperors would often consume this herb right away the moment they get their hands on it.

Minhyuk understood what Haze wanted to do here.

‘Haze, you...’

The twenty soldiers and the four minute time limit. Those were the conditions that she brought forth.

In order for these kings and emperors to regain their talents, they immediately chose strong personnel from their empires and kingdoms and brought them forward. Their numbers were well over fifty.

‘You induced them to agree to the conditions for me to summon the Immortal Knight Order?’

The Battle God’s Immortal Knight Order was something that Minhyuk had acquired when he became the Battle God. There were a total of twenty knights in this order and all of them looked shabby and rugged, like mere weak soldiers. However, the most important point here was...

‘The commander of the Immortal Knight Order is Sword God Valen.’

Chapter 852

Active Skill

- You cannot summon those that belong to the Beyond the Heavens Empire.*
- You can gather and rally everyone that you know, whether they are at the end of the world or in Hell, in front of you as long as they give you their explicit approval.*
- Those who have been summoned can only fight for you for four minutes.*
- Your CHA stat will permanently decrease every second upon summoning the Immortal Knights. The permanent decrease will depend on the number you summoned.*
- Your EXP will permanently decrease every second upon summoning the Immortal Knights. The permanent decrease will depend on the number you summoned.*
- The moment you gather the Knight Order, your HP will immediately drop to 20%.*
- You can select the commander of the Immortal Knights that you will gather.*

- The commander of the Immortal Knights will have a 1.2x increase in strength.*
- The Immortal Knight Order boasts highly of their covertness. They would appear with a ragged look and would wear a horned helmet on their heads. The horned helmet will cover their face making it impossible for others to see through the identity of the knights.*

The Battle God's Immortal Knight Order was an active skill. Due to the restriction, the skill could not be considered as a broken one.

-You cannot summon those that belong to the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

To put it simply, one could only summon outsiders. However, it was nigh impossible for players to recruit powerhouses externally. It was also very difficult for them to gain their approval for a summoning. On top of that, there was even a severe penalty where one's CHA and EXP would permanently decrease while the knights were summoned.

'A single summon can result in a one level drop.'

With the decrease in CHA, summoning one Knight would most definitely decrease one's CHA by around 400.

The use of this skill required careful consideration of the gains and losses. It would be very beneficial for Minhyuk to summon them if the Beyond the Heavens Empire was in danger. Their help would allow them to tide whatever danger they were facing. Even if Minhyuk's level dropped by one and his CHA decreased by 400, as long as the situation became beneficial for them, he would still summon them. That was the case right now.

'Haze... You...'

The chosen warriors of the kings and emperors would challenge those that Minhyuk summoned. The kings and emperors were already in the midst of choosing the talent that they would send forward. The numbers of their chosen had now increased to above a hundred.

If they could get a hundred thousand platinum for each of these one hundred men, then they would be able to gain around ten million platinum in total. That was a ridiculous amount of profit. It would be enough to fund the operations of the Beyond the Heavens Empire for half a year.

However, the kings and emperors were proud and confident. Minhyuk could only summon twenty soldiers, while they had chosen almost a hundred men on their side.

"Once you are called, please choose one of the summoned soldiers. Now, please line up."

"Ugh! Why are you so slow?!"

"I might miss the opportunity to bring back our talents because of you!"

The kings and emperors blamed their subordinates for not being able to stand at the front. As for the one standing at the front of the line, it was none other than Emperor Elise. He was currently smiling in delight. The one that he had put forward was one of his empire's pride.

The Aplath Empire might not be as strong as the Ardo Empire or the Luvien Empire. However, their empire was filled with exceptional talents, and there was another name that they went by: the

Empire of Martial Masters. Despite the recruitment offer from the Beyond the Heavens Empire, there were still countless talents that remained in the Aplath Empire to protect Emperor Elise.

Among those that remained in the Aplath Empire was Sir Arcalso, the *Prince of the Sword*. Arcalso was a high-leveled NPC whose level had crossed Level 610, and was a genius born and raised in a prestigious and noble swordsmanship family. In fact, Arcalso's family had provided countless warriors and masters to the Aplath Empire.

Emperor Elise smiled in delight as he looked at Arcalso's dignified and majestic appearance. At the same time, he also did not forget to express his anger toward the Beyond the Heavens Empire for taking their talents away.

"Are they allowed to kill if they obtained victory?"

Emperor Elise was arrogant through and through. He, along with the kings and other emperors, had already tried to recruit the talents of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. They believed that without those talents, the Beyond the Heavens Empire had nothing.

'Do they have hidden talents? That's bullshit.'

If that was the case, then they would have already seen those talents during the war with the Luvien Empire. In his eyes, this was nothing but Haze's all-in to bluff their way out of the situation. The proof of this was the flustered expression on Haze's face.

"Is- is there a need to kill?"

She looked confused as if she had not expected the situation to reach this point. It was as if they were in a situation where they were trying to fend them off with lies but they ended up outright attacking them.

However, unbeknownst to him, this notification rang in Haze's ears.

[Devoted Acting has been triggered!]

The Devoted Acting skill allowed one to act as if they were those that were worthy of the Best Actor Award, even though they were not originally good at acting. It was like giving Haze, whose acting was already on par with many A-listers, wings. She had only showed some sweat on her forehead and palms, but it made the kings and emperors believe that she was afraid.

"I will kill. Listen, Beyond the Heavens' Emperor, you have taken away our talents and even used that woman named Haze to extort money from our kingdoms and empires. You have to pay for this sin!" Emperor Elise roared.

Hearing this, Haze immediately turned to Minhyuk. She was showing an expression as if she did not want him to agree to this.

"Your- Your Majesty, no matter how..."

Minhyuk and Haze were always in sync. They could tell what the other was thinking with just one glance. Minhyuk immediately adopted an ugly expression on his face. He looked like he was responding to their provocations as he said, "Then, that means that my soldiers can also kill the strong men that you have brought forward."

“Ha- Hahahahahahaha!!!” Emperor Elise guffawed. “Yes. Ah, yes of course.”

“Fufufufufufu!”

“Sure, you can do that!”

The other kings and emperors also burst into laughter.

Haze hurriedly cried out, “Your Majesty!!!”

She looked frantic as if she wanted to stop Minhyuk right away. Then, at that moment...

[Devoted Acting is currently in effect.]

[Your acting will become more powerful when working with another person.]

[Your emperor, Minhyuk, also possesses the power of Devoted Acting.]

Minhyuk was very capable of method acting, and he was making full use of it right now.

“Haze, they have ignored and trampled on the pride of our Beyond the Heavens Empire’s precious talents.” Minhyuk turned to look at the kings and emperors as he continued, “As the emperor of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, how can I just sit back and watch them ridicule my empire without even fighting back?!”

“B- But Your Majesty...”

“This emperor has no intention of changing my thoughts!”

“Forgive this servant of yours for suggesting this thing to the other kings and emperors...” Haze said, bowing as if she was truly a sinner.

Then, Minhyuk said, “I will accept your condition. However, my soldiers will also be allowed to kill your talents.”

“That’s only natural.”

“Well, we don’t know if they could truly kill one of them.”

“Except for those that we have tried to recruit, the Beyond the Heavens Empire has no other talents, no?”

Of course, Minhyuk did not forget to clamp down on those who mocked him and his empire.

“Just like before, I want you to sign a contract. I hope this time, you all won’t go back on your words.”

“Of course.”

“The same should be true for you, Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor.”

Minhyuk received the approval of all of the kings and emperors. Just like they have discussed, they only had four minutes to win their talents back.

“Then, I will summon them now,” Minhyuk said as he activated his skill.

[You have triggered the Battle God's Immortal Knight Order!]

[It will take some time to summon the knights of the Immortal Knight Order!]

[The knights of the Immortal Knight Order are now being summoned one by one!]

Just like that, the knights of the Immortal Knight Order appeared one after the other. All of them were wearing ragged and shabby uniforms—a ripped and shabby robe on top of old leather armor. Their ensemble was also completed with a horned helmet that only showed their eyes, nose, and mouth. The only thing that distinguished them from each other was their physique. Among them, there was one who was as huge as a mountain and another who was petite and slender.

“They have been training in the mountains,” Minhyuk said in embarrassment. He sounded as if he was making excuses for their unsightly outfit.

“We don't have much time. Let's get on with it.”

Elise sounded as if he did not care much for anything else. It was already disgraceful enough for their warriors to fight against these mere insignificant soldiers. However, the one he sent forward was still none other than Arcalso.

“You go on and choose for yourself.”

Arcalso was a very cautious person. He was someone who was not even willing to take on the risk for something if it had a 0.01% chance of failure. Unlike the kings and emperors, he was not misled by their unsightly appearance. Thankfully, he was in a situation where he was free to choose who he wanted to fight. So, he chose the one with the smallest body build.

“I'd like to fight with this person.”

The person that Arcalso pointed at took a step forward. The long hair that was hanging through the gaps of her helmet told them that she was a woman. However, Arcalso did not choose her just because she was a woman. After all, there were cases where women were extremely talented with the sword. Arcalso was aware that he had to take the first win and the reason why he chose her was because of the difference in their physique. There would definitely be a huge power difference between him and her.

Minhyuk, who looked at the person that Arcalso chose, thought, *‘Even if you carefully choose your opponent...’*

Aplath Empire's Arcalso was also someone that Minhyuk tried to recruit. This was because he knew that he was a figure that would definitely be able to shake the entire continent in the future with his sword alone.

However, the figure that was standing in front of Arcalso had a reputation that far exceeded his own.

‘Sword Emperor Ellie.’

She was once chosen to become the descendant of the Sword God. These days, Minhyuk had started to call her by the name.

‘Attention Seeker Emperor Ellie.’

There was just one tiny thing that Minhyuk was very worried about. That worry intensified when he saw the tiny smile on Ellie's lips.

'Look at that. Look. Ahh! That noona! She's definitely thinking about how to get the most attention in front of all of the kings and emperors!'

Minhyuk had already accepted the fact that his Attention Seeker Emperor Ellie noona was a true and certified attention seeker. It was just as Minhyuk thought. Ellie could see that the kings and emperors from various continents were gathered here. Even though she could not reveal her identity, she still wanted to show off her majesty as the Continental Emperor.

'Arcalso, huh?'

Ellie had heard that he was an up and coming swordsmanship genius. She was already thinking of showing this genius how wide the world truly was.

'All of these kings and emperors will definitely be shocked because of me, no?'

The Attention Seeker Emperor was thinking about the attention that she would receive from all of these people.

Then, at that moment, Arcalso said, "Ah, this... I don't know how I will start to attack you. You look like you will break if I tap you."

Ellie stood silently in front of Arcalso despite his provocative words.

"You can attack first," Arcalso said as he shrugged his shoulders.

At this point, Ellie had already determined how she could receive *attention* by teaching this arrogant punk in front of her.

"Kekekeke. Fufufufu."

"He told her to make a move first, no?"

"Go on, let's see it."

"How can she even wield a sword with those small hands of hers~?"

Ellie moved amidst the jeers of the kings and emperors. In one swift movement, her sword had already shot out. Its target was Arcalso's neck.

"...!"

Arcalso was shocked. The speed at which the woman moved was beyond his expectations. He quickly tried to lift his sword to stop her, however, Ellie maneuvered her sword and moved it out of the way. Then, she folded her left elbow and hit him on the chin.

Craaaack—!

The sound of Arcalso's jaw breaking rang loudly in the area. Ellie, someone who was a candidate to inherit the position of the Sword God, had both attack and defense that were beyond anyone's imagination.

Thud—!

It only took one move to knock Arcalso out. The worst part was it was with only her elbow, not even her sword. Ellie stared at Arcalso, who had fainted from the pain of his jaw breaking. Then, she asked Minhyuk, "Can I kill him?"

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Minhyuk grinned as he replied, "Of course, you can kill him."

Chapter 853

The other kings and emperors were fully aware of Arcalso's reputation. He was not only a genius born in a prestigious and noble swordsman family but also a master of the sword who would lead an entire continent in the future.

Arcalso was a high-level NPC, above Level 600, and the commander of the Aplath Empire's First Knight Order. Although he was not yet capable of fighting toe to toe with the Swords of the Gods right now, he had great talent that would very likely allow him to surpass them shortly.

However, that very same Arcalso had fainted from the pain of his jaw being broken. Seeing this, all of the kings and emperors present were left wide-eyed and slack-jawed. The one who was most surprised about this outcome was none other than Emperor Elise.

"What... What the hell is this?!"

Emperor Elise could not understand what was going on.

The woman in a military uniform had been aiming her strike at Arcalso's neck. But in an instant, she had turned, and her elbow had made contact with Arcalso's jaw, breaking it.

It had to be known that Arcalso had fortified his body with strict discipline and diligence. This meant that no amount of force should have been able to bring Arcalso into shock.

'But in just one move...?'

Arcalso had been knocked out with one blow.

The woman then pointed her sword at Arcalso's neck and asked, "Can I kill him?"

The Beyond the Heavens Emperor responded arrogantly "Of course."

The negotiations had already been discussed and signed. Besides, the ones who had suggested this were the kings and the emperors. Even if the woman, Ellie, were to kill Arcalso, none of them could make a fuss or attempt to attack her.

Just when Ellie was about to chop Arcalso's head off...

"W-wait! Stop!!!" Emperor Elise shouted hurriedly. He shook his head as he stood in front of Arcalso. "Th-there's no need to kill him, right?!"

“???”

Ellie stopped in her tracks and turned to look at Minhyuk.

The one who answered Ellie’s unspoken question was Haze. “Wasn’t it you, Your Majesty, who suggested this first? Didn’t you say that you would kill the talents we summoned, and in return, we could also kill the talents you brought forward?”

“...”

Emperor Elise was left with nothing to say. However, Ellie frowned when she heard Haze’s words.

[God’s Negotiation has been triggered!]

“Even so, we, of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, are not cruel enough to kill the talents of the other empires that have gathered here.”

Emperor Elise felt delighted. “Th-thank–”

“However, you have to pay five hundred thousand platinum.”

“This is daylight robbery!” Emperor Elise shouted with wide eyes.

Five hundred thousand platinum was a huge amount even for him.

“Then, shall we kill him, Your Majesty?” Haze asked with a glint in her eyes.

Emperor Elise was rendered speechless. Nevertheless, considering Lord Arcalso’s value, the five hundred thousand platinum would not be a waste.

“N-no... I... I will pay.”

[The Aplath Empire’s Emperor Elise promises to pay 500,000 platinum to the Beyond the Heavens Empire!]

“Please take your sword away from him. However, you may continue to subdue the others who are standing in that line over there,” Haze said.

Ellie found Haze to be quite cute. She nodded slightly as she looked at the long line behind Arcalso.

Flash– Ping– Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping– Ping!

Then, she began to overwhelm and subdue those talents with a single swing of her sword.

Thud.

Thud.

Thud.

The kings and emperors were all rendered speechless as they watched their talents collapse in just a blink of an eye.

Ellie looked nonchalantly at the fallen talents and asked, “Are you going to pay, or am I going to kill them?”

“...”

“...”

[The Iris Empire's Emperor Crevice promises to pay 300,000 platinum to the Beyond the Heavens Empire!]

[The Plaine Kingdom's King Bormon promises to pay 200,000 platinum to the Beyond the Heavens Empire!]

[The Aeodo Kingdom's King Henia promises to pay 150,000 platinum to the Beyond the Heavens Empire!]

Minhyuk knew that his wallet was going to be thick and full as he listened to the notifications that rang constantly in his ears. As for Ellie, she felt very satisfied because she had managed to successfully attract the attention of everyone right from the start.

Meanwhile, the kings and emperors all looked dumbfounded after seeing Ellie's fighting prowess.

'Who the hell is that woman?'

'How is such force coming out of that small body?!'

They could only think of a few people who were that powerful. However, it did not cross their minds at all that Ellie might be part of Minhyuk's knight order.

Meanwhile, Emperor Elise was clenching his fists tightly. Several warriors had lost against Ellie in the blink of an eye, making them lose nine hundred thousand platinum in one go.

“Sir Hanor! Show them your strength!”

“Yes, Your Majesty!”

Hanor was another of the Aplath Empire's prides. Everyone knew that Hanor possessed herculean strength. He had been working as a mercenary for ten years and had even been nominated as a candidate for Mercenary King. He was at around Level 600.

The person whom Hanor had chosen to fight also had a gigantic physique.

Emperor Elise said, “That guy is huge. Seeing that the one with the smallest physique could display such great power, it's clear that their appearances are just for show.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“Show that guy your herculean strength.”

A loud thud echoed as the mountain-like Hanor took a step forward and stood face-to-face with the man he singled out. Despite being over two meters tall, Hanor's opponent looked like a child in front of Hanor, who stood at 2.4m tall and was a *giant* in the literal sense.

Unbeknownst to Hanor, the man he'd chosen to fight was *Mercenary King Venteio*. Just like Hanor, Mercenary King Venteio also used the sword as his main weapon. However, Hanor was so huge that the greatsword he wielded looked like an ordinary sword in his hands.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Hanor swung his sword fiercely as he waited to hear the sound of his opponent's head getting brutally cracked open.

Baaaaaaaang—

However, the only sound was a loud thud. The man lifted his sword with one hand and easily blocked Hanor's attack. Hanor pushed his sword downward with increased force, trying to cut through the man's sword. At that moment, the man began to push back more forcefully.

“Hnggggh...?”

Hanor had never been dealt such a powerful attack in his entire life. He was using both hands to press his sword down, but the man in front of Hanor was successfully pushing back despite only using one hand.

Slaaaaaash—

The moment Hanor tried to counter with increased force, the man immediately swung his sword and cut him down. The man looked nonchalantly at Hanor, who was now bent over backward from the force of his attack.

‘Hanor was nominated as a candidate to become the Mercenary King.’

Minhyuk also knew about Hanor. However, the difference between *someone nominated* and *someone who became the Mercenary King* was like the difference between heaven and earth.

Venteio pointed his sword at Hanor's neck and said, “How much for this one?”

“...”

Anger washed over Elise, making him tremble and shake. However, the problem was he was one of the ones who had suggested that the talents be allowed to kill their opponents. On top of that, he absolutely could not lose Hanor.

Elise's gaze drifted. He finally had the mind to look around him.

“N-no! Don't kill him!”

“Uwooooh! Please... Please spare him!”

A man with only a somewhat well-built physique was completely overwhelming the warriors of the other kingdoms and empires with just a swing of his sword. This man was none other than Overlord Raldo.

There was also a dark-skinned woman holding a mysterious whip. She was completely subduing all of the warriors who chose to fight her with one crack of her whip.

Craaaaaack—

“Keooooooooook...!”

However, the problem was the woman failed to control her strength and ended up killing the warriors who fought against her. This woman was none other than Great Demon Gremory. Gremory

had responded to Minhyuk's summons, but she did not feel the need to spare her opponents. All she wanted was to make the humans who tried to come at her pay the price.

Seeing Great Demon Gremory's actions made the kings and the emperors more anxious. They began to beg for the lives of their men to be spared.

[You have received the promise of a total of twenty million platinum in payment!]

This amount was enough for the Beyond the Heavens Empire to operate their empire for an entire six months while expanding their territory and influence.

After witnessing the warriors on his side lose one after the other, Elise finally felt that something had gone wrong.

"Enough!!! Stop! We can't win!"

He realized that he had once again been fooled by the Beyond the Heavens Empire. Not only were they unable to bring back the talents that they had lost, but they were also forced to lose an enormous amount of funds.

Elise stood up as he shouted at Minhyuk, "You have once again used that glib tongue of yours to destroy us, huh?!" Minhyuk answered him curtly, "What seems to be the problem?"

"Hiiiiik...!"

Emperor Elise could not retort, but his cries were able to stop the reckless behavior of the other kings and emperors present.

Then, Minhyuk said, "There's only one minute left."

After that minute was over, they would no longer be able to fight against the soldiers of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. In other words, they would be left in a situation where they had gained nothing and only lost more.

Realizing this fact, the kings and emperors all shuddered with rage.

However, Beyond the Heavens' Emperor Minhyuk just mocked them and said, "*Hmph*. Fine. I will give you one last chance."

Minhyuk adopted a bitter look on his face as he continued, "After all, what good would it bring me if I'm the only one beating you up?"

"..."

First, he was going to make them listen to his sweet and tempting offer.

"Right now, this knight over here has not been chosen since earlier."

Minhyuk pointed at the knight who looked the most ordinary out of all of the knights that Minhyuk had summoned. The knight had an ordinary physique and an average height, and that was perhaps why he had not been chosen.

"If all of your remaining warriors can win against him, then we will return all of your talents. Additionally, we will also return the platinum that you have promised to pay us as well as the recruitment fee that we received before."

“Your Majesty!!!” Haze shouted hurriedly.

Meanwhile, the kings and emperors began to murmur amongst themselves. There were around forty warriors left. These warriors had levels that ranged between Level 570 to Level 610.

Simply put, Minhyuk’s offer was too sweet. He would return everything if all of the warriors who represented their kingdoms and empires won against one knight. There was a saying that when a person was lost on the road, the most terrifying thing was the fact that their mind would be filled with thoughts of wanting to go home. And right now, that was what was happening. Even though the kings and emperors were very suspicious of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, they still wanted to pin their last hope on him and his words.

Minhyuk nodded slightly at Haze. “What’s the point of beating them up and dealing with them right here and now? It would be better for them to look at Beyond the Heavens Empire favorably in the future.”

The kings and emperors thought that had to be the case. What was the probability of the Beyond the Heavens Empire surviving after they took advantage of all of the people present here? It would be less than 1%. Besides, if the Beyond the Heavens Empire were to truly return what they had promised, then that could be the start of a friendly relationship with the other kingdoms and empires. After all, they had already clearly proven their abilities at this point.

However, what if the Beyond the Heavens Empire was tricking the kings and emperors again?

‘No. That’s impossible. It would be impossible even for the talents of the Beyond the Heavens Empire to deal with this number of people.’

‘One has to be at the level of Spear God Ben to deal with this many people. It’s impossible to hide that kind of power.’

‘This is true.’

One by one, the kings and emperors began to accept the suggestion. After all, no knight could deal with this many people at this level with their power alone. They judged that what Emperor Minhyuk said was very likely to be in their favor.

“There’s not much time left,” Minhyuk reminded them.

With the time ticking away, their conflicting feelings began to grow wildly. Was the Beyond the Heavens Empire acting suspiciously, or was Emperor Minhyuk telling the truth? Should they believe his words or not?

“I... I will accept!” Emperor Elise said.

With someone pulling the trigger, the rest began to follow.

“I will also accept!”

“I will accept it too!”

“Right, let’s do that then.”

“Then, let me thank the Beyond the Heavens Emperor for his kindness and generosity in advance.”

[All of the kings and emperors accepted your proposal!]

[If your knight loses, you will have to return everything that you received from them!]

[If your knight wins, all of the platinum and rewards that they promised you will be paid to you!]

“Since there’s not much time, please come forward quickly.”

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

The knight, who looked like the epitome of the words “plain” and “ordinary,” took one step after another. He looked to be around 176 cm tall and had a well-built physique. Basically, he looked no different from any other ordinary knight.

The kings and emperors were fully convinced that there was no way that such a knight would be able to beat all of the talents present there.

“It would be good if there was no killing involved.”

“Of course.”

“What’s the point in killing that poor and ordinary knight?”

“They will try their best to hold back.”

Around thirty to forty warriors from each of the kingdoms and empires charged towards the lone knight.

However, the kings and emperors were mistaken. The words that Minhyuk said earlier...

—It would be good if there was no killing involved.

Those words weren’t a plea to the other kings and emperors of the other kingdoms and empires but to his knight. After all, the knight’s name was *Sword God Valen*.

Chapter 854

[Your CHA has decreased by 1 point.]

[Your CHA has decreased by 1 point.]

[Your EXP has dropped by 533,314 points.]

[Your EXP has dropped by 568,413 points.]

[Your EXP...]

[Your CHA...]

Minhyuk, who used the Battle God’s Immortal Knight Order without any hesitation, finally experienced firsthand how drastic the penalties were. He could only summon the Immortal Knight Order for four minutes. Unfortunately, almost 300 points of his CHA and 21% of the EXP he needed to reach the next level had disappeared by the 3-minute 30-second mark. He had expected it

to be bad, but facing how vicious and heinous the penalty was for using the Battle God's Immortal Knight Order made him rethink using this skill carelessly.

Fortunately, they were in a situation where the benefits outweighed the penalties, which Minhyuk was looking forward to.

Elise and the other kings and emperors felt relieved as they watched the dozens of warriors charge toward the plain and ordinary-looking knight.

'I will now be able to get my talents back.'

'Fortunately, we will be able to get back our funds.'

'The Beyond the Heavens Emperor does not seem to want to beat us.'

'It seems like we might even have to ask him to teach us a lesson properly.'

'More than that... I feel sorry for that knight. It seems like the Beyond the Heavens' Emperor is working his men harder than what we've heard?'

That would probably be the case from someone else's point of view. How wretched would that man be for his emperor to send him forward to get beaten like that? Of course, they did not truly care about that man's welfare at all.

At that moment, a knight by the name of Johan could be seen running at the forefront. He was from the Pallotin Kingdom and was at Level 585. Approaching the ordinary-looking knight, Johan immediately raised his sword to hack him.

Vwoooooooooong—

To his shock, his attack hit nothing but air. The ordinary-looking knight easily evaded his attack just by twisting one of his feet. However, what happened next was far more surprising. The ordinary-looking knight slammed the hilt of his sword on Johan's face.

Baaaaaaaaaaaang—

Johan soared to the sky, before hitting the ground a few meters away from where he initially was.

"Ughhhh..."

At the same time, the ordinary-looking knight, in other words, Sword God Valen, finally made a move.

'I was told that I should not kill.'

The reason why Valen had not yet crossed the River of Reincarnation was because he felt like he still had quite a lot of things left to deal with. Besides, if he crossed the River of Reincarnation, he would no longer be able to see Minhyuk. To be honest, it was more so because he always felt happy to see Minhyuk.

"...!"

The kings and emperors finally realized that something was wrong after they witnessed the ordinary-looking knight overpower the Knight Commander of one of the kingdoms just by slamming the hilt of his sword. However, this realization came far too late.

One of the spearmen tried to stab Valen with his spear. This spearman was hailed as the greatest since the establishment of the empire he belonged to.

Ting—!

Valen easily blocked the spear's tip with a light swing of his sword before narrowing the distance between them.

Craaaaack—

The spearman flew back after being hit by the hilt of Valen's sword. Around fifteen warriors rushed toward Valen at the same time. However, none of their attacks reached him.

Craaaaaack—

Clack!

Crack, crack!

The kings' and emperors' mouths dropped open as the sound of flesh being hit continuously rang in their ears. How many times would mere humans be able to witness a god's momentum and might? They had only heard rumors of Spear God Ben's deeds and acts. Sword God Valen was almost on par, perhaps even stronger than Spear God Ben.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom—

In just an instant, the fifteen mighty soldiers who were the pride of their kingdoms and empires collapsed all at once. But the onslaught on Valen did not stop, as twenty more people charged at him.

“Over— overpower him somehow!”

“We have to subdue him!”

“We have to hold him back even if it means risking our lives!”

Everything would be over if they could not overpower that man. They would not be able to bring back their talents and huge amounts of money would be lost to the Beyond the Heavens Empire. The twenty warriors charged at Sword God Valen, filled with the determination to give up their lives. However, their numbers could not narrow the gap in skills.

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

With every swing of Valen's sword, a soldier would fall down. Valen's attacks moved at a much faster speed than the attacks of the soldiers. Soon, the summoning time of the Battle God's Immortal Knight Order ended.

[The Battle God's Immortal Knight Order has ended.]

[All of the knights will be sent back to where they were summoned from!]

[Your CHA has decreased by 413.]

[Your EXP has decreased by 26%.]

Just like Minhyuk expected, the penalty was truly too vicious and heavy. However, the gains truly outweighed those penalties.

[The Beyond the Heavens Empire was promised a price of 300,000 platinum and one Authority Herb per person that fought against the knights of your empire.]

[You have been promised 15.34 million platinum!]

[You have been promised 96 Authority Herbs!]

However, it did not end there. After all, Haze was now a god.

[Abundance Authority has been triggered.]

[The God of Devotion will be able to get 1.5x more.]

“...!”

Minhyuk could not help but be surprised. After all, he would be able to receive 1.5x more rewards if he obtained it through Haze.

‘Isn’t this a total scam...?’

Minhyuk was fully convinced that there was no other non-combat god that was more powerful than the God of Devotion.

‘What if this gets triggered all the time?’

This was comparable to having a 1.5x increase in artifact drop rate for other players.

The fighters who collapsed on the ground were all groaning in pain. Even if they had seen everything with their own eyes, the kings and emperors still could not bring themselves to believe the situation.

Gulp—

Someone gulped dryly. At the same time, their resentment toward the Beyond the Heavens Empire grew even more. However, on the other hand, they had to think carefully before they could even make another move.

‘I would have to be prepared to lose everything if I ever want to bring down the Beyond the Heavens Empire.’

Even though they would face a newly established empire, they knew that they had to prepare themselves to lose everything if they wanted to fight against them.

“You! You did it again...!”

The kings and emperors realized that they had been in the palm of Minhyuk and Haze’s hands.

However, Minhyuk just looked coldly at them as he said, “This is the price that you have to pay for touching this emperor’s people.”

The truth was, Minhyuk wanted to beat the shit out of all of these kings and emperors regardless of the benefits or whatever it was that he had to gain. After all, he saw Haze as his younger sister.

“A war? Sure. I can accompany you for as long as you want if the need arises.”

“...”

“...”

“However, I will order my men...”

Minhyuk grinned before continuing.

“...to kill all the kings and emperors present here first.”

“This– This bastaaaaaard!!!”

“Bastaaaaaaaaard!”

“Im– im– impudent!!!”

However, despite their enraged screams, the kings and emperors did not really dare to step forward. Their strongest men were all sprawled on the ground. Just the thought of having Spear God Ben and Brod coming to assassinate them should a war break out was enough to make their visions turn dark.

“Let’s go, Haze.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

Minhyuk and Haze stood up and turned around to leave.

The following notifications rang for everyone in the Beyond the Heavens Empire:

[Prime Minister Haze, an ordinary human being, has become the God of Devotion!]

[As the most devoted person to her empire, she bears the name of the most noble god, the God of Devotion!]

Despite the grandness depicted by the voice that rang in the empire, Haze was worried. It was easy for people to get jealous. Jealousy and envy were terrible, *terrible* things.

A mere human being who was good at lying had risen to the position of a god. This was an achievement that even those who trained their whole lives, or seen everything and had pursued something for as long as they had remembered, might not be able to achieve at all. In contrast, Haze was able to achieve it because she was good at lying.

Because of her crippling social phobia, Haze no longer went out of her room to wander around the Beyond the Heavens Empire for her private matters. It had been years since she last went out for herself. However, His Majesty told her when he grabbed her hands that the people of the Beyond the Heavens Empire had grown to love and cherish her after seeing how devoted she was to the people and the empire.

Was that truly the case?

After they had returned, Haze slept in her room for one whole day. Finally, after hiding in her room for several years, she gathered her courage and decided to go out. Even so, she was still very worried. What if the people looked at her with eyes filled with envy and jealousy?

But when she walked out of the castle, she met the gaze of one of the maids. Shockingly, the gaze that the maid used to look at Haze was different from the gaze that she was very familiar with. The maid's gaze was filled with genuine concern as well as respect and admiration.

"Prime Minister, isn't it better for you to get some more rest? I heard about what happened."

"Ah, I'm alright."

The maid that was now looking at her with concern was once the maid that had looked down at her.

'Isn't that Liar Haze?'

'She's already so good at lying despite being so young?'

'She's nothing but a mere commoner.'

But now, the maid's gaze was truly filled with concern and respect. Haze slowly walked out. This time, she ran into some of the soldiers of the empire.

"Prime Minister! Are you alright?!"

"I will not let those goddamn bastards go!!!"

The soldiers roared furiously, their faces turning red from anger, as if they would go out to invade the kingdoms and empires right away. They were also the same soldiers who had looked down on and hated Haze before.

'A young girl like that is giving us orders?'

'That's ridiculous.'

But now, they were very worried about Haze. They were even ready to give up their life just to take revenge for her.

Haze slowly gained confidence to go out. She took one step after another and finally stepped out of the imposing walls of the castle. At that moment, the beautiful scenery of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, a scenery that she could only get a vague glimpse of before, finally appeared in front of her eyes. She would often look down on the ground to avoid the gazes of the people around her whenever she had to leave the castle. Because of that, she failed to see the true beauty of the empire that she loved so much!

When the people saw her, they immediately ran to her.

"Lady Haze! Are you alright?"

"Did you get injured?!"

"I will not let those bastards go!!!"

"Aaah! They damaged your silky smooth skin...!"

"Are you really fine?!"

Haze kept walking amidst the concern of the residents of the empire with many of them carefully asking about her well-being.

“Noona! Are you okay?”

“Haze noona, did you get hurt?”

“I heard about what happened, Unnie. You endured even though those kings and emperors pointed their swords at you, right?!”

As Haze rubbed the head of one of the girls, another girl declared loudly, “Noona! My dream is to become someone like you!”

Haze kept on walking.

“Haze!”

“Prime Minister Haze!”

“Hazeeee!!!”

People kept on calling out her name. They showed their concern and felt relieved when they saw that she was fine.

‘It seems like I might have cut myself off from the kingdom.’

The things that she had done before when the Beyond the Heavens Empire was still the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were completely unknown to the world. Back then, the people did not know the purpose of her lies. Haze had been shackled by what she experienced in the past, thinking that everyone would hate and loathe her for what she did. But that was not the case at all. As time went by, the Beyond the Heavens Empire grew to care for her. They even worried for her. They would even go so far as to comfort her to the best of their abilities.

The God of Devotion was a god that did not possess God’s Voice. However, the God of Devotion had a special power called *The God of Devotion’s Story*. It could broadcast her achievements and the progress that she had made through the voice of Athenae, the greatest god. Through this skill, Athenae would read her achievements as if she were reading a fairy tale. And right now, this *God of Devotion’s Story* was triggered.

[Among the many gods, the God of Devotion was considered the most ordinary.]

[Among the many gods, the God of Devotion had the least number of skills in their repertoire.]

[However, the God of Devotion was the god that was loved the most by the gods.]

[Among the many gods, the God of Devotion was the god that mostly lived for the sake of the other gods.]

[The young and petite woman took small steps on her journey, with her first step for the benefit of the people.]

[The woman took the second step in hopes of protecting her kingdom.]

[The woman took the third step in hopes of bringing a life of abundance and prosperity for the empire that they had established.]

[She might be the most ordinary god.]

[But she is the most precious god.]

Chapter 855

Minhyuk immediately consumed the Authority Herbs the moment he returned to the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

[You have eaten an Authority Herb.]

[You have gained 1 CHA.]

[You have eaten an Authority Herb.]

[You have gained 1 CHA.]

[...Authority...]

Fortunately, he was able to restore some of the CHA that he lost, thanks to the Authority Herb.

‘That’s amazing.’

The quick buck that he made with Haze this time was truly beyond expectations. What stood out more was Haze’s *Abundance Authority*. It allowed her to obtain 1.5x more of what she had negotiated before! Because of that, Minhyuk was able to obtain funds that were well over twenty million platinum.

‘Ten million from this money can be used to rehome our newly recruited talents and help with the training costs.’

The other ten million would be used for the empire’s maintenance funds, while the excess would be used for the empire’s expansion and development as well as the strengthening of the military’s training. This was the only way for the Beyond the Heavens Empire to survive.

‘We need to grow and develop faster.’

Otherwise, the Beyond the Heavens Empire would be devoured.

Over twenty million platinum was a ridiculous amount. However, this amount disappeared in an instant after it was divided for the empire’s development. Fortunately, there was no need for him to worry. After all, their empire now had the reliable God of Devotion on their side.

•*Passive Skill: Inducement*

•*Passive Skill: Agreement*

•*Passive Skill: God’s Truth*

•*Passive Skill: God’s Negotiation*

•*Passive Skill: Devoted Acting*

•*Passive Skill: Abundance Authority*

•*Passive Skill: God of Devotion’s Story*

•*Active Skill: Truth or Lie*

Haze's special abilities were unique. Usually, an individual's passive and active skills would have a 5:5 ratio. However, in Haze's case, most of her special abilities were passive skills. Among these passive skills, the thing worth paying the most attention to was the Abundance Authority.

Rank

: God

Passive Skill

•*Using the various skills in your possession, you can obtain 1.5x more of gold or whatever quantity of the item that you will receive.*

•*There is a 1.2% chance of obtaining double the amount of what you will receive.*

It was an extremely good skill. And although there was a minuscule 1.2% probability of it getting triggered, doubling the amount that Haze would receive was nothing to scoff at.

Finally, there was a skill that Minhyuk was very confused about.

•*'Truth or Lie?'*

It was the only active skill possessed by the God of Devotion and it had a very unusual name. Of course, Minhyuk checked it right away.

Active Skill

•*You can express a variety of things—like what you want to create, how you want to attack the enemies and many more—through your words and it would come into existence.*

•*However, it could either be a truth or a lie.*

•*There is a 50% chance of it becoming the truth or vice versa. The probability would vary slightly from time to time.*

•*The higher the difficulty and level of the way you want to attack your enemy, the higher the chances of it becoming a lie.*

•*However, if it becomes the truth, your attack skill will be able to exert whatever force you want.*

•*The skill damage would be determined by the system.*

•*If you so wish, the skill can have no damage at all.*

“...?!”

Minhyuk was shocked.

‘*She can create whatever skill she wants?*’

To put it simply, if Haze were to say, ‘*The sea shall rise and reach heights of ten meters and engulf all of the enemies in a one-kilometer radius.*’ and it became the truth, what would happen? A ten-meter-high wave from the sea would appear and devour the enemies.

Or if she said, ‘*Strike the enemy’s vital point with a heavy blow.*’ and it became the truth, then a powerful skill would manifest and stab the enemies’ vital points.

It was a skill with endless possibilities. Of course, it did not have a 100% chance of being triggered. After all, there was a higher chance of it becoming a *lie* the more one talked about things that were well beyond their powers. However, it was obvious that this was the most cheat-like skill that Minhyuk had seen so far.

Just in time, Haze entered Minhyuk’s office with a bright smile on her face. She said, “Your Majesty! Your Majesty, what you told me was true! All of the people really care for me! They all like me!”

Minhyuk had actually heard the God of Devotion’s Story fifteen minutes ago. The Greatest God Athenae’s voice ringing like she was reading a fairy tale book had the power to make those that heard her voice feel comfortable. He smiled at Haze, who ran swiftly to where he was with a delighted smile plastered on her face.

“I told you so. Many people care about you. They love you dearly.”

Haze was embarrassed but the happy smile on her face was unmistakable.

Actually, Minhyuk wanted to check the skill now. So, he said, “Haze, can you try using Truth or Lie?”

“Truth or Lie?”

Haze was also very curious about the only attack skill that she had gained, the Truth or Lie. Haze’s lips cracked into a grin when she saw Minhyuk nod.

“I understand, Your Majesty.”

At this point, Haze knew that the Truth or Lie was a much more important skill than what she originally thought. But it did not matter, the more ways there were to protect the Beyond the Heavens Empire, the better. She had determined that this power could allow her to protect the empire that she loved.

The two went out to the balcony together. The balcony was a place where one could see the entirety of the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

“Of course, there should be no actual damage.”

“I understand.”

As long as Haze wished it, she could take out the attack from the skill created by the Truth or Lie. In other words, she could create something that could be considered an illusion.

Haze, who was pondering deeply for a moment, finally opened her mouth and said, “The first cherry blossom tree grew.”

[You have used the Truth or Lie!]

“The tree is teeming with the blooming cherry blossoms.”

[The Truth or Lie’s skill is starting to take form!]

“Tens of thousands of trees carried the vibrant pink and blooming cherry blossoms on their branches.”

[The Truth or Lie’s skill is taking form!]

“As the cherry blossom season has gone by, the petals of the cherry blossoms slowly fell down and covered the world, like snow in winter.”

[Is it the truth? Or is it a lie? This will now be chosen!]

[The skill does not have any attack power.]

[The probability of the skill being the truth has increased.]

[Truth or Lie.]

Haze and Minhyuk looked over the Beyond the Heavens Empire as they waited for the result of the skill, waiting expectantly.

[Truth!]

In the sky above the Beyond the Heavens Empire, a gigantic tree grew rapidly until a cherry blossom bloomed on its branches. The tree was soon covered with cherry blossoms while tens of thousands of trees appeared around it.

“W- woooooooooah!”

“It’s a cherry blossom tree!”

“So- So beautiful...”

The tens of thousands of trees that bloomed above the Beyond the Heavens Empire resulted in a stunning sight. In this stunning view, the cherry blossom season soon passed. And slowly, ever so slowly, the petals of the cherry blossoms began to fall like snow. It was just as Haze said.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Minhyuk's and Haze's eyes met after they watched the falling cherry blossom petals cover the entire Beyond the Heavens Empire.

What if, for example, those falling cherry blossom petals could explode the moment they landed on the ground?

'It would cause a huge amount of damage.'

Or, what if those cherry blossom petals pierced through the bodies of the enemies?

'Many enemies would die.'

Of course, if Haze set it that way, then the probability of the skill becoming the *truth* would drop sharply. However, assuming that the Truth or Lie skill could succeed even once in ten times, or even once in a hundred times, it would still be a complete cheat.

Haze said, "Now, I..."

"..."

"I also have the power to protect you, Your Majesty."

Haze seemed to be more pleased by that fact.

Minhyuk smiled faintly and asked, "Aren't you hungry?"

Only when she heard that question did she realize that she had not eaten anything for a long time. Seeing her clutching her stomach pitifully, Minhyuk said, "I will cook for you."

"You mean, you're going to cook for me, Your Majesty?"

Even though Minhyuk loved to cook, he did not cook just for anyone. He was already an emperor after all. Haze was very moved when she heard his words.

Minhyuk took her back inside before starting to cook. He boiled the noodles and quickly stir-fried the black bean sauce. He also fried the pork coated with batter inside the pan filled with boiling oil.

Sizzleeeee—

He also boiled some soup with dashes of chili oil floating above it. At this point, one would be able to guess what Minhyuk was cooking. Yes, it was none other than Chinese Cuisine. Chinese food would always hit the spot whenever one did not want to do anything, or they were just having a day off. The dishes that Minhyuk made were jjajangmyeon, jjamppong, tangsuyuk and fried rice.

"Take your pick and eat, Haze."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Haze said, her face filled with great anticipation as she raised the chopstick in her hands. At that moment, she caught sight of Minhyuk.

'You clearly told me that you would cook for me, right?'

However, Minhyuk looked more excited than Haze.

Minhyuk looked at the jajangmyeon in front of him. It looked shiny with the sauce, and the scent wafting from the bowl was enough to make one's mouth water. Minhyuk quickly mixed the jajangmyeon with his chopsticks. Then, he grabbed a huge mouthful and placed everything in his mouth.

"Sluuuuuuuuuuuurp!"

A pleasant smile instantly appeared on his face the moment the sweet jjajangmyeon entered his mouth.

"Sluuuuuuuuuuuuuurp!"

Minhyuk personally preferred adding some kimchi and pickled radish on his jjajangmyeon. However, there were days when he would want to add some scallion kimchi on it. So, he quickly took out a huge mouthful of scallion kimchi that he had prepared before and put everything in his mouth.

Crunch, crunch—

The spicy scallion kimchi made his grin grow even wider. After eating the jjajangmyeon like that, he turned his attention to the tangsuyuk. He grabbed a piece of crunchy pork and dipped it in the sweet and sour sauce.

Munch, munch—

The pork, which was crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside, tasted superb.

"Kgghhkhk..." Minhyuk exclaimed in admiration as he picked the bowl of jjamppong.

Then, he immediately took a sip of the spicy and refreshing soup.

"Sluuuuuuuuuurp."

What else could he do but shout, *Ho!* in admiration? The spicy and hot jjamppong easily washed away the greasy flavor of the jjajangmyeon. And since he already finished the jjajangmyeon earlier, he now put his entire attention into finishing the jjamppong. Minhyuk quickly removed the flesh from the shell of the mussel and ate it together with a huge mouthful of the noodles that was coated with the spicy soup.

"Sluuuuuuuuuuuurp!"

Then, he picked some raw onions and dipped them in some chunjang.

"Kgghhk!"

The chunjang greatly enhanced the sweetness of the raw onions. After eating the jjamppong like that, Minhyuk quickly mixed the fried rice with the remaining black bean sauce from the jjajangmyeon.

Sluuuuuurp—

Whenever his throat got dry or the greasiness got too much, he would take a sip of the spicy jjamppong soup. Minhyuk ate everything with a wide and bright smile on his face.

‘As expected of His Majesty...’

Haze could not help but look at Minhyuk in awe as she watched him devour three bowls of jjajangmyeon, two bowls of jjamppong, one serving of fried rice, and two large portions of tangsuyuk in one sitting.

Minhyuk sat in front of Haze as he waited for her to finish eating.

Knock, knock–

Minhyuk looked at the door in doubt when he heard the loud knock.

“Enter.”

The one who knocked on the door and entered the office was none other than Brod.

“Your Majesty, there’s trouble.”

Minhyuk’s doubt grew when he heard Brod’s words.

“Trouble?”

“The newly recruited talents are harboring severe distrust toward Your Majesty.”

“...?”

The look of doubt and puzzlement grew even deeper on Minhyuk’s face.

Chapter 856

The Beyond the Heavens Empire had over thirty newly recruited talents. Most of them were born as *legends* or *heroes* in their previous nations. Of course, these people had heard the word *genius* from a very young age. Although their levels varied greatly, they were high, ranging between Level 570~620.

The one in charge of their training was none other than Amacar, an incredible talent and a genius in his own right. He was also well-versed in teaching and training, possessing a passive buff skill that would help those under his tutelage to grow on their own. Because of that, the talents respected Amacar.

It had to be known that the reason why most of these talents came to the Beyond the Heavens Empire was because they all had something that they wanted to achieve. One was promised the first peek of all of Best Selling Author Aruvel’s new works, while another was tempted by the black hair that grew on their shiny and twinkling heads. However, after obtaining what they wanted from the Beyond the Heavens Empire, they were overcome with regret.

‘Was it that important enough for me to leave the place where I was born?’

‘Because of my greed, my daughter, who came here with me, is having a hard time adjusting to life in the Beyond the Heavens Empire.’

‘Because of my greed, I have brought pain to my family.’

‘Just this? Is this the only thing that I can receive when I come to the Beyond the Heavens Empire?’

That was just how a person was. Once they obtained what they had been craving for and wanting for a very long time, it would never be enough. That was not all, the families that these recruited talents brought with them were truly unable to adapt to life in the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

That was only natural. After all, they left the place that they had lived in for all their lives and were forced to adapt to living in a very unfamiliar place. In addition, the majority of the people who moved here came from places that had conditions that were far better than those the Beyond the Heavens Empire was offering them. After all, the empires where they came from had a stronger foundation and were much larger than the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

Of course, their distrust was completely directed to one person alone.

“Can His Majesty make such an outstanding dish?”

“His Majesty commands Sir Brod, Sir Amacar, and the Spear God. However, does he truly have the qualifications to hold that much power?”

“Is he truly someone who can lead us?”

The Beyond the Heavens Empire was just a kingdom not too long ago. Of course, they, the representatives of their respective empires and kingdoms, had heard of the majesty of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom before. The feats of how they had sealed Great Demon Verus, hunted the Six Monster Gods, as well as the Demigod Asura.

However, they were also fully aware that the legends and myths of every kingdom and empire often tended to be exaggerated. It was likely that the Beyond the Heavens Empire was no different.

“Sir Amacar, you haven’t seen His Majesty’s military might and power yet, right?”

“...That’s– that’s right.”

Amacar could only smile bitterly as he watched the newly recruited talents chat like that during their rest in between training. One of the reasons why Amacar had chosen Minhyuk was because he could see his potential to stand toe to toe with Consteynus, perhaps even higher. Also, he could see that he was an emperor that cared for his people.

However, that was not the case for the others. They had to be presented with a definite *result* and clear *profits* to prove that their choice to migrate to this empire was correct.

‘This is a situation that His Majesty will have to deal with and go through himself.’

Amacar’s favorability with Minhyuk increased when he talked with him. However, these people had not had a chance to have a proper conversation with His Majesty yet. For them, Minhyuk was just someone who recruited them after striking a deal with their previous rulers.

“It feels like we’re nothing but commodities. It’s as if those emperors had traded us, no?”

“Sir Brod and Spear God Ben had said that Emperor Minhyuk would be different. However, it remains to be seen.”

“We haven’t even seen the face of our new emperor.”

This was also true. Minhyuk had not met with them properly yet. In a way, this could be considered to be Minhyuk's fault. However, it was mostly because he had a lot of work to deal with. Haze had been kidnapped by the other kings and emperors right after they had finished recruiting these talents, and he had only been able to return from rescuing her less than a day ago.

However, such an excuse would not work for these people.

"He's strong and he can make outstanding dishes? It's too exaggerated."

They thought that this would be very difficult. How was it possible for someone to be strong, and also able to make divine and godly dishes? They thought that this was most likely a lie that God of Devotion Haze had concocted.

At that moment, Minhyuk appeared with Brod from afar. Minhyuk had expected this to happen sooner or later.

'These talents were recruited so suddenly. It would be strange if they did not have a single complaint.'

They all stood awkwardly, greeting Minhyuk with half-hearted courtesy when they saw him approach.

"You're here, Your Majesty."

Minhyuk took a careful look at these talents. These people had all been considered as the pride of their kingdoms and empires previously.

"I know that it's been a while since you came to my Beyond the Heavens Empire. Forgive me for not paying much attention to your situation during that time."

"You must be very busy. However, it seems like it's because you believe that things will turn out fine, no?"

The blunt and sarcastic response came from Spearman Keller, causing Minhyuk's face to turn ugly.

'I have to beat this bastard up first.'

Spearman Keller was at Level 610. Among the newly recruited talents, he was considered one of those top-quality warriors. The reason why he came to the Beyond the Heavens Empire was because Spear God Ben came to see him. He had never thought of bowing down to anyone other than Spear God Ben.

Unfortunately, it was not just Keller who was looking at Minhyuk with clear distrust. Most of the recruits were looking at him with the same look.

Then, Minhyuk said, "If, by any chance, there is something that you need, I will make sure to help you."

"Help us? What do you mean by that?"

"Of course, I will help you with what this emperor does best."

Everyone here knew that what Minhyuk did best was *cooking*.

“I have heard rumors about how excellent Your Majesty’s dishes are. However, I don’t know if your dishes will truly be able to give us what we want.”

This time, the one who replied was a man named Halsen. He was well-known for being a *Culinary Researcher*, a class that had the power to study any dish and, surprisingly, make its effects even better.

‘For me, he’s a necessary talent.’

Halsen might just be the talent that Food God Minhyuk needed to add more strength to his buffed dishes.

Of course, there were also quite a lot of people who spoke as sharply as Halsen.

“Who knows? What I want right now is to get a foundation that would allow me to grow stronger and develop further.”

“HmMMM...”

“Hm... Will Your Majesty even be able to help us achieve what we want...?”

Minhyuk took note of everyone who mocked and jeered like Keller in his head. Then, at that moment, a man carefully raised his hand.

“Your Majesty.”

He was the most cautious among all the talented men present. Unlike those who spoke before him, his gaze was filled with respect and admiration for Minhyuk.

‘Ride Kingdom’s EpauLe.’

Ride Kingdom’s EpauLe was the kingdom’s knight commander. Strangely enough, EpauLe immediately migrated to the Beyond the Heavens Empire the moment the empire reached out to him.

“I want to gain strength and obtain a faster growth rate than what I have now.”

EpauLe was the weakest among the newly recruited talents, his level being only around Level 530 or so.

“And I really, *really* want to taste the delicious dishes that Your Majesty makes.”

EpauLe had heard about how the Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor declared that he would create an empire where no one would go hungry. From what he saw, the Beyond the Heavens Empire was truly making it happen. He had experienced what it was like to be hungry when he was younger. Because of that, he had developed a huge craving for food. He especially loved trying delicious dishes. He truly respected Minhyuk for creating an empire that was vastly different from the empire he came from, where there were many suffering from hunger.

“Good.” Minhyuk nodded. “I will give you a faster growth rate and a stronger body that will allow you to train harder and faster.”

Many people snorted when they heard Minhyuk's words. As for Epaule, the respect in his eyes did not diminish at all.

'He will give Epaule a faster growth rate? A stronger body?'

'It's true that one can gain a faster growth rate and strength. However, is that something that a buff dish could give?'

Despite their doubts, Minhyuk continued with what he wanted to do and used his Create a Recipe skill.

[Creating a recipe that the other party desires.]

[You can now check the recipe for Braised Chicken.]

[The amount of buff that can be used has been decreased due to creating a recipe.]

The dish that Epaule wanted the most right now was braised chicken, a dish with a sweet aftertaste.

"From what I know, those who can make pretty good buff dishes can only give others a 10% increase in their growth rate and power," Halsen said, his words pouring cold water over everyone listening.

Although he said so, he had judged that it would be extremely difficult to increase the amount of buff by that much. A dish that could increase growth rate and power by 10% already had a value that was far beyond anyone's imagination. Halsen said those words because he wanted to give Minhyuk an ultimatum. Minhyuk had to make a dish at that level to convince them.

However, Minhyuk paid him no mind and just started cooking.

'Epaule, I quite like you.'

His eyes were bright and clear. When he checked the man's status, he could see that Epaule would be able to develop and become a great asset for their empire as long as people like Amacar and Ben could support him well. Since he showed respect for Minhyuk right from the very beginning, Minhyuk would make sure to give him what he wanted.

'I will cook the best dish for you.'

Epaule was considered the underdog. And this weak underdog hoped that one day he would have the power to overcome all of the people who stood above him. He knew that it would be a very tough fight. After all, everyone here was a genius. But Minhyuk would do his best to make it a possibility.

Minhyuk slowly fell into a trance as he continued to cook for Epaule. Many people laughed at the sight. The one that stood out the most among the laughing and jeering men was none other than Keller.

Keller stared at Minhyuk, who was sweating profusely as he stood in front of a pot and continued to cook. He thought, *'The one that I'm serving is Spear God Ben. Even if you're the emperor, you do not have the qualifications to have me under your command.'*

Keller was proud and arrogant. He was still in his twenties yet he was already over Level 600. He also became the first Spear Master in the empire that he belonged to before. When he came to the Beyond the Heavens Empire, it was out of respect for Spear God Ben, not Minhyuk.

‘To think His Majesty declared that he’s going to grant more strength to that guy named Epaule? Everyone has a limit.’

Epaule was the weakest among them. Even if he became 10% stronger, it would still be very hard for him to win against them.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk, who had finally finished cooking, smiled in satisfaction as he placed the dish in front of Epaule.

“Tha-thank you for the meal, Your Majesty!”

Keller looked at Epaule with contempt, as if he was pathetic for flattering Minhyuk. That was when his gaze drifted down to the braised chicken. He could see the glossy, flat potato noodles peeking from the steaming soy-based sauce of the braised chicken.

‘It looks delicious, at the very least.’

The dish was also filled with sweet potatoes, rice cakes, and chicken meat that were covered with the sauce. It looked mouth-watering.

The first thing that Epaule grabbed was a large chicken leg, bringing it to his mouth to take a huge bite. Immediately, his tongue could taste the amazing harmony of the sweetness and saltiness of the dish.

“...Wow.”

Epaule’s eyes opened wide. This was the first time that he tasted such a delicious chicken in his life. He had been looking around carefully, but he threw all caution to the wind and began to eat as fast as he could.

He grabbed a mouthful of the flat potato noodles and quickly slurped it up.

Sluuuuuuurp—!

The flat noodles that had soaked the sauces well tasted amazing. It tasted even better when he ate it with the rice that Minhyuk had served together with the dish. He scooped a few spoonfuls of the braised chicken sauce, crushed some potato in his rice bowl, and mixed everything before putting a huge mouthful in his mouth.

“Woaaaah.”

Epaule felt delighted by the cacophony of flavors that greeted his mouth the moment he put everything in.

As mentioned before, Epaule was a foodie. He loved food more than anything else. He was extremely grateful to Minhyuk for giving him such delicious food.

[Epaule’s favor has reached the MAX level.]

[Epaule is one of your newly recruited talents.]

[He will do anything for you!]

Epaule even began to cry as he continued to eat the dish in front of him.

‘No. Is it really that delicious?’

Keller found himself wondering. Was the dish so delicious to the point that one would be reduced to tears? What kind of bullshit was that?

After finishing the meal, Epaule shouted in shock, “A– aaaaaaaack!”

He even fell after taking a step back in surprise. The people all turned to look at him in confusion and doubt.

“Wh-what’s the matter with you?”

“Th-the speed of my growth and my strength...”

“Your strength...?”

Everyone perked their ears up. Meanwhile, Epaule stared at Minhyuk and the empty bowl of braised chicken alternately in disbelief. It was as if he could not believe what was presented in front of him.

Then, Epaule said, “It has increased by 35%.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

While everyone was left reeling in shock, Keller stood up and shouted with veins popping on his neck, “What bullshit!”

It was completely ridiculous. He had never heard about something like this in his entire life.

Even the Culinary Researcher Halsen chimed in and said, “I have never heard of such a dish in my life! A dish like that would be God-grade. However, it’s obvious that the dish in front of you is not a God-grade dish!”

Because Halsen was a culinary researcher, his words carried the highest credibility. Keller’s eyes immediately narrowed when he heard that.

“I’m sorry if this offends you, Your Majesty. But you might have teamed up with Epaule to win our favor, no?” Keller said so to make sense of this nonsensical bullshit.

However, as one of the strongest, Keller’s words seemed to carry some credibility. After all, why would Minhyuk feed Epaule, the weakest among them, the first? How could Minhyuk cook such an incredible dish that could allow him to grow stronger by 35%?

“If you’re doubtful then...”

Minhyuk turned to look at Keller with a cold and sharp glare, “Go and spar with Epaule, you f*cking bastard.”

Chapter 857

Keller had always received the respect and admiration of many from the Arcas Kingdom, the empire that he belonged to before. He was indeed worthy of respect and admiration. After all, he held the position of commander and led all of the knights at the young age of twenty.

“Go and spar with Epaule, you f*cking bastard.”

‘Bastard?’

Hearing Minhyuk call him something Keller never heard in his entire life, the veins on Keller’s head popped out. Even the king that he served before did not insult him like that.

“Did you just call me a bastard?”

Minhyuk just continued to glare coldly at him and the other recruits. Minhyuk’s CHA had already exceeded 14,000, completely overwhelming those around him.

‘Wh-what heavy pressure...’

‘I can’t breathe.’

‘I have never felt a pressure this heavy in my entire life.’

Minhyuk spat coldly, “I’m fully aware of what you think of Epaule. You think that he’s nothing but a knight commander from a small kingdom on the frontier and that he’s the weakest among all of the recruits. After all, the first thing that you did when you came here was to determine your ranks, no?”

None of them could refute Minhyuk’s words. It was the truth. Epaule was truly the weakest person in this place.

“But you dare to slander me in my face and say that I conspired with Epaule to trick you? Which emperor do you think would sit still and remain quiet when they hear such words, huh?”

No matter how arrogant and proud Keller was of himself, the man standing in front of him was an emperor. Keller was the one who committed an act of disrespect toward the emperor first. This behavior was worthy of the death penalty. That was why Keller immediately clamped his mouth shut.

Keller pointed his spear at Epaule. “Unbelievable. I have to spar with Epaule? He’s the weakest among us. If he ends up getting injured in this spar, know that it’s not my fault.”

“Epaule, are you confident?”

Epaule was stunned when he heard Minhyuk’s question. He pondered for a moment before slowly nodding his head in agreement. Aside from his growth rate, all of his stats had increased by 35%. Still, this effect would only last for two weeks.

There were many reasons why Minhyuk was able to make a dish with such a high buff effect.

The first one was because of the 15% increase in buff dish effects when cooking with the Bizarre Cauldron.

The second reason was the triggering of Trance when he wanted to feed Epaule, the only person who showed respect and admiration for him, with a delicious meal.

The third reason was that the dish was *legendary grade*. Minhyuk had used several precious ingredients when cooking earlier. He wanted the first dish of his that Epaule would eat to be special.

There was also a reason why Minhyuk had proposed a spar between Keller and Epaule, as he watched them raise their weapons and pointed them at each other.

‘Epaule has a more outstanding mastery of his skills compared to Keller.’

Epaule might be the weakest among them, however, compared to all of the recruits present here, he was the one with the highest mastery of his skills. This was probably because of the difference in their innate mana.

Keller snorted. *‘This punk will be able to beat me? That’s bullshit.’*

Keller was one of the strongest among all of the people present here. In his eyes, Epaule was nothing but a child. Of course, he would not be foolish to let the opponent strike first. So, he immediately went on to attack Epaule.

Claaaaaang—

However, the moment his spear made contact with Epaule’s sword, he knew something was off.

‘It feels heavy?’

Under normal circumstances, Keller should have been able to push Epaule’s sword away easily with his spear. However, Epaule’s sword felt heavy and he failed to push him back. Then, Epaule began to counterattack.

Swoooooosh—

Epaule’s sword moved swiftly, his attacks targeting all of Keller’s vital points.

“Heok...!”

“How- how come...?!”

The people watching on the sidelines were both shocked and impressed. Epaule’s movements were swift and skillful. His sword was so fast that their eyes could barely follow its movements. Keller was soon forced to be on the defensive. In response, he immediately released the power that accumulated in his spear.

“Bull’s Spear.”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

A force akin to a bull’s charge slammed into Epaule and sent him flying back.

“Ugh!”

However, Epaule only let out a groan. He immediately stood up and blocked Keller’s spear, all the while moving to slash his opponent’s waist.

Clang—

Slaaaash—

Keller, who was being cut and slashed by Epaule's sword non-stop, felt unbearable shame and disgrace.

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

Keller found himself in a situation where he was being overwhelmed and pushed back by Epaule's tremendous speed.

“Wow...” Someone in the crowd exclaimed unknowingly.

After the humiliation, anger began to wash all over Keller.

“How dare you, you bastard...!”

Keller had always treated Epaule as nothing but a child. For him to lose to a brat, was unfathomable. At that moment, a spark bloomed at the tip of Keller's spear. This was the power that brought Keller to where he was now.

‘Bull's Lightning Spear.’

Bull's Lightning Spear was a skill that could instantly kill his target. Clouded by anger, Keller could only see his pride and ego being trampled on. His face was more important than the fact that this was just a mere spar.

Crackle, crackle, crackle, crackle—!

Keller stabbed toward his opponent, with the power that could kill even the strengthened Epaule all at once.

“Sir-sir Keller...!”

“Oh no!”

Everyone was alarmed by Keller's sudden move. This was supposed to be a spar, not a fight to the death.

At that moment, the Beyond the Heavens' Emperor stepped forward while holding a mixer and a bowl, and quickly whipped the mixer.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

[Cancel.]

The overwhelmingly powerful force that was shooting toward Epaule scattered and disappeared with the wind. Minhyuk took this time to wrest away the spear in Keller's hands.

“What do you think you're doing...?!”

Then, Minhyuk raised his hand and slapped Keller on the cheek.

Slaaaaaaaap—!

The force of the slap was so strong that Keller's face was forced to turn sharply. He even felt like he was seeing stars in front of him. However, this blow only served to anger Keller even more.

'How dare this man slap me?!'

"How dare...!"

Slaaaaaap—!

Minhyuk slapped Keller, who tried to rebel against him, on the other cheek.

'I wanted to make him lose but this is much better.'

Minhyuk knew that this was an opportunity. There was no need to fear Keller trying to break free and rebel against him because it would be of no use. After all, Minhyuk's stats easily surpassed Keller's stats. Just like that, Minhyuk began to slap Keller. He was doing it so easily as if he was patting the water off of himself on a rainy day. Anyway, he had enough justification to do this.

"You tried to kill your comrade because you can't contain your anger during a spar? Unforgivable. I wouldn't stand for such behavior!"

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!

All of the recruits were frozen solid when the sight in front of them registered in their heads.

'How? He easily overwhelmed Keller?'

'Oh my God. Is it possible to beat Sir Keller like that with just your bare hands?'

'Is the Beyond the Heavens' Emperor truly as strong as they say?'

What happened next was quite interesting. To be honest, Minhyuk just wanted to beat the shit out of Keller. However, this act made everyone feel both shock and awe.

[Ava's favor has increased.]

[Korda's favor has increased.]

[Uriman's favor has increased.]

Even their favorability toward Minhyuk was increasing.

At that moment, Spear God Ben appeared. It was just when Minhyuk was about to beat Keller to a pulp.

"Your Majesty, what's happening?"

Keller wanted to die right at that very moment. Spear God Ben was the person that Keller respected and looked up to the most. Of course, Ben had recognized the boy's efforts and had always treated him very well. He was very considerate of him.

Ben's expression turned ugly when he heard what happened earlier from Minhyuk. "Beat him some more. How dare he say those words to you, Your Majesty?! And he even dared to kill his opponent during a spar?!"

Only after he heard Ben's words did Keller realize that he had been too complacent. It seemed that the old man who had cared for him deeply before was turning a blind eye to his plight.

"I am going to pass a summary judgment on you. Do you have anything to say?"

Keller, who was beaten to a pulp, could not say anything. He would not be able to say anything even if he was brought to death right here and now.

When Minhyuk finally stopped beating Keller, he said, "I will kill you. But before that, I will show you through the others, those things that you wanted me to prove to you."

It was also a message to everyone present here.

The first thing that they were most curious about, Minhyuk's power, was already proven to some extent when he beat Keller to a pulp with his bare hands alone. As for the second one, it was whether his cooking skills were truly excellent. After all, they all said that he conspired with Epaulé to trick them earlier. This was what Minhyuk was going to prove to them.

So, Minhyuk began to cook. He used his *Create a Recipe* skill on everybody else except Keller. Then, he began to hand the dishes one after another. There was only one result for those who finished eating his dishes.

"Heok...! Your- Your Majesty! You have my utmost respect!"

[Ava's favor has reached the MAX level.]

[Ava is one of your newly recruited talents.]

[He will do anything for you!]

[Korda's favor has reached the MAX level.]

[Korda is one of your newly recruited talents.]

[He will do anything for you...]

Notifications rang constantly in Minhyuk's ears. With this as proof, they could no longer ignore and deny the existence of Minhyuk, the emperor of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. On top of that, the effects of the buff dishes that Minhyuk gave them were truly outstanding. It was to the point that they felt like they could reach their goals swiftly with the increase in their growth rates. Because of that, their favorability toward Minhyuk had reached an all-time high.

"I am very proud of the fact that I chose to come to the Beyond the Heavens Empire."

"Your Majesty, please forgive me for the disrespectful behavior that I have shown you earlier."

"Your Majesty, I will make sure to make up for the disrespect that I have shown you today, with my life!"

They immediately began to cry for forgiveness for the disrespectful behavior that they had shown Minhyuk earlier. Standing among these crying and shouting recruits was Keller, who wanted to die on the spot.

'I was too conceited.'

It was at this point that Keller admitted that his behavior was worthy of death. However, Keller was not really a bad seed. He was just suffering from the overwhelming pressure. Yes, it was true that he willingly came to this empire. He felt happy that he would be able to stay by Spear God Ben's side.

However, he had doubted if the Beyond the Heavens' emperor would be able to guide him on the right path.

Yet, His Majesty Minhyuk had proven to him that he was fully capable of doing so. It made him realize that he had committed a grave sin.

'I still want to live longer...'

He wanted to grow to be more like Spear God Ben. He had made a vow to himself that he would make it happen no matter what. Alas, because of his behavior, it seemed that death was right around the corner.

The others, who had eaten Minhyuk's dishes, were looking at Minhyuk with eyes shining with respect and admiration. At this point, Minhyuk just continued to cook.

Just when Keller was waiting for his death penalty, Emperor Minhyuk stood up and approached him. Keller immediately closed his eyes and waited for the strike that would take his life.

"Eat, Keller," Minhyuk said, handing over a bowl of fondue to Keller.

Keller was very fond of fondue. However, even if that was the case, he still hesitated.

Minhyuk growled, "Eat it right now or I will kill you."

Keller hurriedly picked up his fork and started to dig into the fondue. In that first bite, the flavor and texture of the fondue was so amazing that he almost cried out in admiration.

[Emperor's Comfort has been triggered!]

Minhyuk watched Keller eat the fondue in a hurry. Then, he said, "Keller, I can kill you right here and now. However, I won't."

"..."

Keller's hand stopped moving, his gaze turning blank as he looked at Minhyuk.

"I do not want to kill my people with my own hands. Also, I believe that..."

"..."

"...you will be able to become a proud pillar of the Beyond the Heavens Empire."

"..."

"The reason why I beat you up was because I wanted to make you understand that you have to cherish your comrades. And that you can't show disrespect to me. If you can do that, then I will welcome you with open arms and regard you as one of my people, Keller."

[Emperor's Comfort is reaching its climax.]

Keller was deeply moved. The emperor, who could regard him as a traitor and a rebel, was comforting him. The emperor even looked at him with soft and gentle eyes while patting him on the shoulder!

“I believe that you can follow in Spear God Ben’s footsteps and succeed him. Can you make it happen?”

Keller felt his emotions boil in the depths of his heart when he heard that question.

‘Ah, what a cool and wonderful emperor! He even spared my life!’

Keller immediately slammed his head on the ground as he shouted, “Your Majesty! This Keller promises to dedicate my life to serving you!”

Minhyuk smiled kindly at him. Meanwhile, those around them looked at Minhyuk and began to rethink their view of Minhyuk. It seemed like the man in front of them was a benevolent emperor.

Minhyuk had caught two birds with one stone.

Chapter 858

As he watched Keller vow eternal loyalty, Minhyuk thought, *‘The Beyond the Heavens Empire is in a very precarious situation right now.’*

They might have been able to recruit and win the loyalty of many talented individuals, all the while securing a lot of funds from the other kings and emperors. But, if Minhyuk were to be honest, he knew that what they did was a bit *too much*. To be fair, the Beyond the Heavens Empire would not have made such a move first if those kings and emperors had not tried to recruit their empire’s talents.

‘In the end, nothing good will come out of being at odds with those kings and emperors.’

The relationship between the Beyond the Heavens Empire and the other empires and kingdoms was definitely on the rocks. Fortunately, their relationship with the Ardo Empire and Emperor Consteinus was on the mend.

However, the goal of the Beyond the Heavens Empire had always been the defeat of the Luvien Empire. The number of empires under the rule of the Luvien Empire reached well over a hundred. At this point, Beyond the Heavens Empire could be considered isolated and alone.

In a situation like this, there was only one thing that Minhyuk could do.

‘I have to make preparations for the future.’

Minhyuk turned to look at Amacar. It had not been that long since Amacar arrived in the empire. However, in those few short days, he had already made several changes in the military’s training system. But what was most interesting was that all of the changes he made laid the groundwork for the growth of the knights and soldiers. In other words, they were very beneficial to the empire’s troops.

‘Honestly, his military training system is much better than Brod’s.’

No matter which kingdom or empire they went to, few could follow the teachings of Brod and Spear God Ben. That was why Amacar was better in this aspect. Amacar’s power might be slightly stronger than Keller’s, who had just sworn his loyalty to Minhyuk. In terms of his ability to lead the troops, it far surpassed the limits of a human.

Minhyuk quickly checked Amacar’s information.

- *Passive Skill: Dream of Growth*
- *Passive Skill: Centralized Management*
- *Passive Skill: Commanding Officer that has Surpassed God*
- *Active Skill: Hound's Swordsmanship*
- *Active Skill: Hunting Time*

When Minhyuk first recruited Amacar, he had been shocked to see the '???' written beside the ranking in his information. What did it mean?

'That usually only appears if one has not woken up to their full potential and power yet or the system cannot measure them properly.'

Perhaps Amacar was truly standing on the threshold separating a human from a god. There was also Amacar's story, which Minhyuk had heard before.

–He was born a war orphan. He could not remember which kingdom or empire he belonged to before. Emperor Consteinus came across him wandering around and brought him to his empire.

It was truly interesting. He was a war orphan and did not know where he belonged, yet his ranking was listed as ???

. To top it off, all of his skills were outstanding.

His passive skill, *Dream of Growth*, could give a 20% EXP Acquisition Rate buff to those who greatly desired growth and development. *Centralized Management* was also amazing, allowing Amacar to lead all of the knights and soldiers who were lagging to become true knights and soldiers. This skill would allow him to help them to correct all the fine details and their shortcomings. Then, there was the *Commanding Officer that has surpassed God*.

'This is the most important.'

Passive Skill

- When training soldiers, knights, and stronger individuals personally, their growth rate would increase by 25%.*
- When training soldiers, knights, and stronger individuals personally, their potential will be awakened upon leveling up. They will also be able to obtain a higher increase in their stats and skill proficiency.*
- When training soldiers, knights, and stronger individuals personally, various buff effects would be triggered to help the soldiers, knights, and stronger individuals reach their target level at a set period of time.*
- When training soldiers, knights, and stronger individuals personally, they will be given the courage and the will to never back down.*
- The skill will recognize all of the candidates that can become powerhouses and will give them various buff effects that will make their growth rate increase significantly which will allow them to break through their limits.*

Most of the skills in Amacar's possession were extremely powerful skills that could allow others to develop further and grow even stronger.

'These skills must have stacked together and allowed him to create the Hound Knight Order.'

Well, there were no rules that stated that Amacar could not create the second Hound Knight Order.

"Sir Amacar."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"I want you to lead 10,000 elite knights and 100,000 elite soldiers to undergo special training for one month."

The only thing the Beyond the Heavens Empire could do now was to train their hardest to prepare for the invasion and attacks from other kingdoms and empires.

"Can you also bring along the rest that had been recruited by the empire and make them stronger?" Minhyuk asked as he looked at Keller and the other talents.

All of the talents had eaten Minhyuk's buff dish and had gained an increase of 20% in their EXP Acquisition Rate.

Amacar replied confidently, "Of course."

Since they became 20% stronger, they would be able to deal with stronger monsters and gain more EXP. This meant that the effect would double for them. Minhyuk could not wait to see how much they would grow under Amacar's leadership.

"Then, Your Majesty, can I lead the troops you have mentioned and set out immediately for the one month of training?"

Minhyuk nodded readily in response. "Of course."

Amacar immediately left with the knights, soldiers, and talented recruits.

Since Minhyuk wanted to know how much they would grow with this training, he made sure to record the average level of the knights, the soldiers, and the talented recruits before they left. The average level of the soldiers was around 460, the knights at 525, and the talented recruits at 570.

'Will they be able to grow a lot?'

The might and force of their knights and soldiers were already at a level that could completely overwhelm the troops of the other empires and kingdoms, even though they only had a smaller military force. All of that was thanks to the teachings of Brod and Spear God Ben.

At this time, Minhyuk was completely unaware of the impact and influence that the troops that Amacar had raised and developed would bring in the future.

Two weeks later.

The kings and emperors had suffered a huge blow from the Beyond the Heavens Empire, which took away a huge amount of their finances and quite a lot of talent from them. They had gathered together once again, to discuss how they would get back at the Beyond the Heavens Empire for what they did to them.

"I'm no longer worried about those talents that left my side. They abandoned me for that small and insignificant empire. I'm sure they'll never be able to fulfill their dreams for as long as they stay there."

"I'm just worried that their bodies and foundation will be harmed because they are staying in that dreadful and disgusting Beyond the Heavens Empire."

"There's no way that the Beyond the Heavens Empire will be able to handle them!"

From the beginning of their gathering to the end, all they discussed was their hatred for the Beyond the Heavens Empire. However, if they tried to advance and attack them with no rhyme or reason at all, then the others would turn their unkind and hostile gazes towards them.

"Your- Your Majestyyyyyyy!!!"

"Your Majeeeeeeesty!!!"

"There's trouble!"

"We're in trouble!"

The kings and emperors were all surprised by the sudden commotion that broke out outside of the room. When the doors opened, their servants immediately rushed in and approached their respective kings and emperors.

"What- what's going on?!"

"What's the matter with you?!"

“Please come out right away!”

The kings and emperors stood up and rushed outside. What greeted them outside the doors was a red moon. It was so red to the point that one would wonder if someone had poured blood on it.

“This- Thiiiiis- What is this...?!”

“What in the world is happening?!”

At that moment, a series of notifications rang in the ears of all the players in Athenae.

[You can earn rewards if you protect the empires and kingdoms from the invasion of the Dark Elves!]

At the same time, this voice resonated in the ears of all of the kings and emperors present.

[Dark Elven King Jack, one of the Six Monster Gods, has awakened to the world!]

The kings and emperors watched as an army swarmed over the horizon before them. Their numbers were in the millions.

Along with their appearance, another notification rang all over the world.

[Upon killing Dark Elven King Jack, players that have been chosen as dark elves would be given the opportunity to change their race to Dark Elf!]

The voice that marked the beginning of the episode once again rang and resonated in the entire continent.

[Elves roamed the lands freely in the beginning of the continent.]

[The elves loved and advocated for peace. They taught the humans, who appeared one day, how to hunt. They even stayed by their sides and provided them with homes.]

[Like that, the humans and elves lived together peacefully for thousands of years.]

[But one day, the humans, who had a stronger and higher reproduction rate, grew in power and began to drive the elves away.]

[They killed and plundered.]

[Thousands of elves died.]

[Then, one of the Six Monster Gods, the father of all elves, Jack, began to nurture them solely to drive away the humans that killed them. Because of the influence of the Father of All Elves Jack, the elves' skin slowly turned black. It was for this reason that they were called Dark Elves.]

[The Dark Elves were born stronger and faster than humans. They could also acquire abilities faster than humans did.]

[The speed of their growth was very surprising. The Dark Elves, who started to train from their birth, did not know what ‘peace’ was.]

[But even before Six Monster Gods' Dark Elf Jack could use his army to reclaim his home, there was no longer a place for the elves on the continent.]

[The father of the elves, one of the Six Monster Gods, Jack led all of the Dark Elves and disappeared from the face of the earth.]

[Today, they have finally come back to reclaim the lands that had been taken away from them.]

[The time has finally come for them to bring judgment upon the greedy humans.]

The kings and emperors all trembled in fear. They have also heard stories and legends about the *Dark Elves*. Fortunately, something good came out of the situation. The kings and emperors were already gathered together.

“Summon the army right now!”

“Slaughter all of the dark elves before they could even strike at our empires and kingdoms!”

A coalition army was formed rapidly at the command of the kings and emperors. Each of them had sent around 200,000~500,000 troops, creating a huge army with troops that reached around nine million in number.

However, a few days after this incident, the kings and emperors received shocking news.

“The entire army... has been wiped out.”

“The dark elves are far too strong.”

“The difference in our numbers makes it hard for us to deal with them!”

But then, they received another shocking news.

“The Luvien Empire has declared they will not send any help.”

“...”

“...”

The kings and emperors groaned in frustration. The enemies were now marching towards their kingdoms and empires.

“Who- who the hell can stop them?!” One of the emperors howled. This howl represented what everyone gathered was feeling at the moment.

Someone, anyone, had to stop them.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk welcomed everyone who came back from Amacar's training. They only trained for a month, but their eyes carried an unmistakable sharpness by the time they came back. But that was not the end of it. A series of notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[Your knights, soldiers, and talented recruits who underwent the special training have grown tremendously!]

[Most of their hidden potential has been awakened with their hard work!]

From what Minhyuk had recorded, the soldiers' average level was around 460. But it was different now.

[The average level of the soldiers that underwent the special training has increased to 483!]

As for the knights, their average level had been around 525.

[The average level of the knights that underwent the special training has increased to 537!]

But there was something far more surprising than that. The talents they recruited from several kingdoms and empires had an average level of 570.

[The average level of the talented recruits that underwent the special training has increased to 596!]

[By applying various effects from passive skills to those who have eaten buff dishes, Amacar successfully brought out the full potential of the soldiers and knights who trained under his command!]

The grin that spread on Minhyuk's face almost reached his ears. He thought, *'Amacar, you're freaking amazing...'*

Chapter 859

Aplath Empire's Emperor Elise felt his vision turn dark when he saw Six Monster Gods' Dark Elf Jack and his Dark Elven Army appear. They had already taken down two kingdoms and were already marching toward the Aplath Empire.

The Aplath Empire might be lagging quite behind the Ardo Empire, but they were still one of the top ten empires in the entire continent. But even the emperor of such a strong empire was left flabbergasted and speechless when he saw the devastation and slaughter that was unfolding in front of him.

"My- my god..."

A few days ago, the nine million troops of the coalition army, established by the kings and emperors, were annihilated by the Dark Elven Army all at once. There were around forty kings and emperors that had gathered back then. That was why they could assemble a massive army despite only sending a few troops. However, each kingdom and empire had different thoughts when they faced that devastating situation.

'The chance of all kingdoms and empires collapsing is very high.'

The number of the enemies was around five million at most. However, the dark elves were inherently stronger than humans, thus quickly destroying two of the kingdoms and the coalition army.

'Even the most elite of our knights can only deal with one dark elf.'

However, the surprise did not end there. Not only were the dark elves' close combat abilities as excellent as their knights, but they could also cast magic by borrowing the power of spirits through *spirit magic*. Because of that, the Aplath Empire's knights were having a hard time.

The average level of the soldiers was around 440. In comparison, the average level of the dark elves was around 530, which made it harder for them to fight back. Simply put, there was a considerable gap between their powers and abilities.

In the beginning, they had convened with a strategy.

–How about gathering the mighty powerhouses of our kingdoms and empires?

However, they soon realized how foolish this thought was.

–What if they get wiped out, too?

–Then, what would happen to us?

That was right. If they did that, there was a high chance that the pillars of their kingdoms and empires would die on the battlefield.

A fierce battle was currently underway in front of the Aplath Empire. It was a battle between the fifteen million troops gathered by the kingdoms and empires and the ten million troops sent out by the Aplath Empire and the dark elves. However, only the coalition army was decreasing in number.

All of the kings and emperors were standing atop the walls of the Aplath Empire and watching this massacre unfold.

“...What- what should we do?”

“Tell us! What should we do?!”

All of the kings and emperors felt their visions go dark after seeing the Dark Elven Army speed up their march.

The screams of the soldiers and the clanging of weapons rang non-stop on the battlefield, where the fight between the dark elves and the coalition army led by the Aplath Empire was happening. The strongest and most elite knights of each empire and kingdom could not believe what was happening right in front of them.

Clang– Clang, clang, clang, clang– Clang, clang, clang!

The force behind the thin rapiers wielded by the dark elves was far too heavy and strong. On top of that, there was a small sphere releasing dark energy above the heads of the dark elves. These spheres were none other than the Spirit of Darkness.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa–

The spirits of darkness used their power and cast temporary debuffs on the knights that their dark elves were fighting against. It was an extremely terrible debuff that forced a 15% drop in their attack and a 20% drop in their attack speed. But that was not all. The spirits of darkness would also cast debuffs on the knights and soldiers in their vicinity.

“Kghk- keuaaaaaaaaaaack!” One of the knights screamed as blood spurted out of his neck.

The skilled dark elves completely controlled the tide of war with their rapiers in hand. However, they did not only rely on their rapiers. They would also shoot arrows from the crossbows hanging on their backs from time to time. Crossbows were weapons that generally had lower accuracy. However, in the hands of the dark elves, the crossbows could accurately fire arrows at the necks and other vital points of the coalition army troops.

“Hiiiiiiiiik!”

“Don’t- Don’t come near me!”

“Don’t come here!”

“They- they’re too strong!”

“Commander! The enemies are too strong!”

The coalition army built around the Aplath Empire had the advantage in numbers. However, it was still challenging for them to kill the dark elves. When they saw the hundreds of thousands of spirits of darkness flying to the sky, the coalition army could tell that something unusual was about to happen.

Then, the spirits of darkness in the form of spheres shot down toward the coalition army.

“Ahihihihi!”

“Hehehehe!”

“Ehe! Ehe!”

“Die! Heeheehee!”

Baaaaaaaang—

Boooooooooom—

Baaaaaaaam—

Baaaaaaaang—

Booooooooooom—

As these spirits of darkness fell, it was as if someone cast several Explosion Magic all at once, as several explosions erupted all over the battlefield and reaped the lives of many. This single attack raised the number of casualties to 1.5 million out of the twenty-five million troops of the coalition army. Alas, their nightmares were just beginning.

Six Monster Gods’ Jack, sitting on the sidelines until this moment, suddenly made a move. With his black skin and white hair, a beauty and grace that anyone could admire, Jack flew to the sky, his black cape fluttering behind him. In his hand was a black longsword, a weapon utterly different from those the other dark elves wielded.

All eyes were fixed on Jack as he floated in the sky above them.

[The Great Spirit of Darkness Pero has been summoned!]

Great Spirits had not made an appearance in Athenae at all. The highest level of spirit that a player had encountered was only a high-ranking spirit.

[The Great Spirit of Darkness Pero has descended!]

[The Great Spirit of Darkness Pero is the most powerful among the Five Great Spirits!]

The great spirit that appeared was the strongest among all of the great spirits who had not yet made an appearance.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The three-meter-tall Great Spirit Pero, whose body was engulfed with black flames, looked very similar to Ifrit. He was stuck behind the flying Jack.

[The Great Spirit of Darkness Pero has lent you his strength!]

The black streams of energy that flew out of Pero's hand were sucked into the black longsword in the hands of Dark Elf Jack.

“Thieves.”

In the eyes of the dark elves, the humans who took the land away from the elves were nothing but thieves and plunderers. Dark Elf Jack had been waiting for this moment for a very long time. He even went so far as to hide himself and the other dark elves in the darkness, while drinking the Water of Life to prevent themselves from aging.

“Your judgment day has arrived.”

Crackleeeeeeeee—

A crescent sword light shot out of Dark Elf Jack's black longsword when he swung it. The mages hurriedly cast shields, and even high-leveled mages tried to erect barriers to block the attack, but it was of no use. Dark Elf Jack's power completely ignored the defenses that they tried so hard to cast.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

The crescent sword light that was tens of meters in length cut the coalition army's troops into two. In a single swing of Dark Elf Jack's sword, 40,000 of the troops died.

[Dark Elf Jack. Level 747.]

Dark Elf Jack was one of the Six Monster Gods. Not much was known about him since he had been hiding in the darkness for a very long time. This very same Dark Elf Jack landed on the ground and began to cut down the coalition army's troops.

Slaaaaaaaaash—

Dozens of knights died in his hands with every swing of his sword. And whenever he borrowed the power of the Great Spirit of Darkness Pero, thousands more would die. With him entering the battlefield, the dark elves began to push back the coalition army at a crazy pace.

It only took half a day to kill more than seven million of the coalition army's troops.

“A- aaaaaaaack!”

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!”

“Hiiiiiiiik!”

The coalition army, who fought as far away from the empire as possible, were now pushed back with their backs against the walls of the Aplath Empire.

Then, at that moment, Dark Elf Jack raised his fingers to his mouth and whistled. “*Fweeeeeeeet—!*”

At his call, huge werewolves appeared in front of the dark elves. These were not ordinary werewolves either. They were the werewolves that Jack had nurtured alongside the dark elves for a long time. They had black manes, were the size of a lion, and all had high levels.

[Dark Werewolf. Level 580.]

Around a million of them appeared. The dark elves, who immediately mounted on the backs of the dark werewolves, started to charge forward.

All of the soldiers and knights on their path had been knocked down.

“Grrrrrr!”

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!”

“Keooooook!”

“Keuhaaaaaack!”

The dark werewolves were strong. Their teeth could easily tear off the limbs of the soldiers and knights that blocked their paths, while their feet could easily crush the bones of their enemies into powder. But that was not all. The dark elves that rode on their backs would also attack and stab the troops in their necks.

Just like that, the coalition army was pushed back, like a tidal wave receding back into the sea.

“Your Majesty! You have to order an evacuation!”

“We must evacuate our people now!”

Emperor Elise’s face grew ugly. However, even the other kings and emperors agreed to those words.

“Emperor Elise, we will assist in the evacuation of your people as much as we can.”

“Let us disperse and allow the people to seek refuge in other kingdoms and empires. Our kingdom will open our doors wide for your people.”

Elise knew that this was the best decision at the moment. The Aplath Empire, one of the top ten empires, might possibly have to depend on other kingdoms and empires for their survival now.

However, the other kings and emperors also knew.

‘*We’re going to be next.*’

‘*How long can we retreat like this?*’

‘Will the entire continent be taken away from us like this?’

At that moment, Emperor Elise asked Tactician Farrow, “Is there a way for us to get through this disaster?”

“Ten soldiers cannot beat a single knight. Ten knights cannot beat a single hero or legend.”

That was right. The advantage in number would only work if the gap in power was not that large.

“Right now, the dark elves are the knights. And us? We’re just soldiers. If there’s someone that can match them or even overpower them, then there is a possibility for a breakthrough.”

If there truly was someone like that, then they would be able to make a breakthrough somehow.

“I’m sorry to say this, but our story is already over. All of the other kingdoms and empires do not wish to lose their talents.”

“...I see.”

If they lost their talents, then they would also lose their nation’s pillars. At this moment, the kingdoms and empires felt how it was such a waste for them to lose their talents to the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

Baaaaaaaang—

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

At that moment, the werewolves began to smash the gates. They had somehow reached the walls by charging through the gaps in the coalition army.

Emperor Elise looked back at his empire. *‘Where will we go if we leave this place?’*

Was the Luvien Empire really not coming to their aid? If the Swords of the Gods appeared, then they could probably take down and drive away those dark elves. Of course, all of the kings and emperors present were of the same mind.

Now that they were reduced to becoming the *ten soldiers fighting desperately against a single knight*, the only way for them to survive was the appearance of a *hero or a legend that could overwhelm ten knights*. Otherwise, their kingdoms and empires would collapse.

With a melancholy look, Emperor Elise ordered, “Heed my orders, evacuate all of the people...”

Then, at that moment, a notification rang.

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that Lives for Someone, Leads Someone on the Right Path, and Protects Someone, is looking at you.]

At the same time.

Minhyuk looked at his men lined up in front of him. His knights and soldiers had all grown sharper and more potent. As for the heroes and legends they recruited from the other kingdoms and empires? All of them had also grown stronger.

“Do any of you regret coming to this emperor’s empire?”

“We do not have any regrets, Your Majesty!!!”

“We do not have any regrets, Your Majesty!!!”

A smile of satisfaction bloomed on Minhyuk’s face when he heard their loud cries.

He would turn them into heroes and legends who could take on hundreds of soldiers alone. And what did he need to achieve that?

First, the Food God’s dishes.

Second, the Guardian God, Obren.

The Beyond the Heavens Empire had now started their preparations for war.

Chapter 860

Rumbleeeeeeeee—!

The trailer, which was very effective in making large batches of dishes, spewed wisps of the Eternal Flames through its vents.

Minhyuk knew it better than anybody else. *‘This is an opportunity.’*

He had seen the current situation of the episode during the broadcast and knew that the Luvien Empire had turned a blind eye to the plight of the other kingdoms and empires. On top of that, no high-level rankers were helping the coalition army and fighting the Dark Elves on the battlefield. Why was that the case?

‘A lot of the high-level rankers are now almost at Level 600. If they go there and die, then they will just move further away from Level 600.’

Even the players who had already reached Level 600 had to consider their choices carefully. They had yet to verify what would happen to them once their levels decreased after reaching Level 600. Since the high-level rankers paid no heed to the kingdoms and empires, the ordinary players dared not go.

As for the Luvien Empire, they disregarded them because they were aware that these kingdoms and empires had made contact with the Beyond the Heavens Empire and even tried to recruit people from there. They intended to wipe out as many kingdoms and empires that made contact with the Beyond the Heavens Empire, who had defeated them, with this opportunity.

Minhyuk thought, *‘If the Beyond the Heavens Empire helps them, then...’*

The Beyond the Heavens Empire, which was in a massive conflict with them, could rise to the top. They could take this opportunity to forge close relations with them. But to do that, Minhyuk needed to make many preparations.

The first was, of course, his dishes. Minhyuk intended to put those that Amacar had trained last month on the field, including the talented recruits. These recruits had come back much more powerful and would grow more potent with the various buff effects. Their performance was very essential to this plan. Why?

‘The kings and emperors will all be surprised by the stronger and more extraordinary performance of the people they once trusted and relied on.’

But that did not mean that Minhyuk should stop there with the preparations.

‘We must capture the hearts of the kings and emperors. And these talents would be the ones to do just that.’

-The Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor is extremely worried about all of you!-

This was what Minhyuk wanted them to say and do on the battlefield. They had to make it look like that was indeed the case.

Haze explained what the talented recruits needed to do to make that happen, and she was very good at it.

“Everyone, what you need to do is simple. You have to emphasize that the Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor was very worried about the situation and immediately began preparations to send troops right away the moment he heard the news. You must attract the attention of many kings and emperors upon your appearance. The plan works only when you attract their attention, and they have focused on you.”

“I’m quite interested in that...”

“Hmmm...”

“Hmm...”

The talents looked flustered and embarrassed. How should they get attention? What kind of method was that? Minhyuk even went so far as to personally invite an instructor who would help them be proficient in gaining attention.

“Attention Seeker Emperor... No, Her Majesty, Sword Emperor Ellie has arrived.”

The instructor was none other than Attention Seeker Emperor Ellie. A buzz unfolded among the talents when they saw her appear. They were all aware of Ellie’s reputation and fame. She was the strongest sword master of the current era who abandoned the position of the Sword God to defend and protect her empire. Of course, her appearance alone forced all of the talents to focus.

“I would appreciate it if you could explain to them how to get the most attention possible.”

Ellie immediately ran when she heard Minhyuk’s request.

‘This is likely to gain attention from the talented recruits.’

It was as expected of Minhyuk's Attention Seeker Emperor, Noona Ellie. She was already thinking about how to imprint her existence in their minds and how she could capture the hearts of the new legends that would emerge on the continent.

After pondering momentarily, Ellie swung her sword in the air. Her movements made them feel like she was fighting an enemy in front of her.

"After you cut down an enemy, look at them like this," Ellie said, her expression majestic and noble as she lifted her chin. "Then say, *The blood of my enemy will dye the entire battlefield red.*"

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Everyone, including Haze, was rendered speechless for a moment.

'Ugh. I got goosebumps.'

The words were so cringy that goosebumps rose on their skin. However, Ellie thought differently. She had been researching ways to get the most attention as much as she was doing sword training.

"What do you think would happen if you appeared and cut the head of the enemy in a situation where tens of thousands of enemies surround you?"

Everyone imagined themselves standing alone, surrounded by tens of thousands of enemies. Then they would cut down their enemy's head and say, *'The blood of my enemies will dye the entire battlefield red.'*

"..."

"..."

"..."

The thought alone made them shudder.

The enemies would lose their morale once they saw the killing intent in Ellie's eyes and the enemy collapsing in front of her. Even the words that she spoke became a declaration to the enemies. It was as if she was telling them, *I will soak this land with your blood.*

"That- that's amazing."

"As expected of the great Attention Seeker Emperor... no, Her Majesty, Sword Emperor Ellie!"

"Ho- Hohohoho. Fufu."

Ellie looked pleased by the attention given to her by the talented people who would lead the continent in the future.

‘Noo- Noona...’ Minhyuk could not utter a word when he saw Ellie acting like that.

Of course, Haze did not forget to emphasize the talents needed to inform the kings and emperors that the Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor was worried for them while getting the attention of many.

‘If you can help them defeat the dark elves, the rewards will follow.’

Now, all that was left for Minhyuk was to finish cooking for those appearing on the battlefield. Minhyuk did his best in cooking and did not spare any ingredients. After all, he knew that the dish would greatly help the empire's future.

Meanwhile, Haze continued speaking passionately to the talents, telling them how to perform fully. But simultaneously, she thought, *‘Obren is probably doing his best, right?’*

The one who received Haze’s passionate lecture before the talents was Guardian God Obren. Guardian God Obren was probably doing his best to express the worries of the Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor to the kings and emperors. Right?

[One of the Absolute Gods, the God that Lives for Someone, Leads Someone on the Right Path, and Protects Someone, is looking at you.]

This notification rang in the ears of Emperor Elise when he was in a crisis and was just about to order the evacuation of his people. It was not just Emperor Elise who heard this notification; all of the kings and emperors on the battlefield had heard it.

[One of the Absolute Gods, the Guardian Deity of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, looks at you sadly.]

The truth was, Obren was not making a sad face at all.

‘I can’t believe you’re making me do this. I will not let this slide.’

However, Obren acted differently from what he thought.

[The Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor Minhyuk is worried about you.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The eyes of the kings and emperors, who stopped to listen to the voice, grew wide. Was the Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor worried about them?! That was bullshit. The guy they met and encountered was not that kind of guy. In their eyes, he was a shameless fraud, a thief who took everything from them.

[The Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor Minhyuk said he truly feels sorry for you.]

“God, how can you spout lies!”

“Ho! How– How can you tell us such lies!”

The kings and emperors jumped and shouted in anger. However, one of the kings said, “But would a god called a *Guardian God* lie? He’s even one of the most dignified and noble gods, an Absolute God.”

“...”

“...”

When they heard those words, the kings and emperors looked at each other. That was right. The god was a *Guardian God*. What kind of an existence was a Guardian God? Was he not a god as clean and pure as white that would protect someone, live for someone, and lead someone toward the right path? Even though he was an Absolute God before, he now carried the name *Guardian God*.

The kings and emperors did not expect that they would break common sense. That was right. It did not even cross their minds that an emperor would dare to order an *Absolute God*, their *Guardian God*, to do something like this.

However, the kings and emperors remained suspicious.

“Beyond the Heavens Empire’s Guardian God, why are you looking at us?”

“You’re telling us lies again! Were you sent by the Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor?!”

[Guardian God Obren shakes his head.]

[The Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor sincerely wants to protect you.]

He wanted to protect them? The one that took from them, humiliated them, smiled coldly at them, was trying to protect them? That was bullshit.

[The Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor said he wanted to help you.]

“...!”

“...!”

The eyes of the kings and emperors grew even wider when they heard the notification. The first to react was Farrow, the Aplath Empire’s tactician. Farrow was a talent recognized by the other kingdoms and empires, so everyone immediately focused on him when he opened his mouth.

“Heroes and legends that can beat 10,000 knights by themselves are in the Beyond the Heavens Empire.”

The kings and emperors could not deny it. Spear God Ben and Brod would be able to handle not only 10,000 knights but also 100,000 dark elves.

“Perhaps the only one that can help us out of this predicament is the Beyond the Heavens Empire,” Farrow hurriedly said.

However, the kings and emperors still did not say anything. They could not bear to ask for *help* from the Beyond the Heavens Empire. Unfortunately, they were in a very urgent situation. Outside the walls, the werewolves and dark elves rammed on the gates like crazy. Their walls were about to collapse. Even if they ran away now, a third of the people of the Aplath Empire would die.

However, something far more shocking happened. The sky ripped apart in the space above the battlefield only to reveal a black hole. And from this black hole, dark elves equipped with black masks and black armor appeared.

[Dark Elf Assassin. Level 637.]

Their numbers exceeded fifty. These dark elf assassins drew their daggers and immediately charged toward the soldiers. Hundreds of soldiers died with every swing of their daggers.

[Guardian God Obren says that there's no time!]

[Guardian God Obren says, 'You're all annoying. Ha...']

[Guardian God Obren immediately corrects himself!]

[Guardian God Obren says he did not say anything!]

'What kind of Guardian God is this?'

Obren, who was overcome with his irritation, started to speak negatively. However, he immediately corrected himself.

"...?"

"...?"

The kings and emperors were all left in doubt. However, they no longer had the leisure to question him.

"Those guys are assassins. The reason why they showed up now is probably because..." One of the kings said, a noticeable tremor in his voice. However, an assassin appeared before he could even finish speaking, sitting leisurely on the walls.

When the assassin saw the soldiers and knights rush at him, he grabbed one of the kings by the collar and threw him off the walls.

"Aaaaaaaaack!"

Fortunately, the mages could hurriedly use their *telekinesis magic* to deliver the king to the ground safely. To their horror, two assassins and ten dark werewolves were waiting. The king was none other than Arcas Kingdom's King Bao.

"S-save King Bao!"

"Go and rescue King Bao right away!!!"

"Quick! Hurry up!!!"

The kings and emperors hurriedly gave out their orders. However, the knights and soldiers could not pierce through the dark elves' defenses in the surrounding area. King Bao was born a nerd. He had only read books and did not know how to fight or protect himself.

"Woo- woooo... wooo, wooo..." King Bao cried, his body trembling from fear.

Werewolves, the size of a carriage, slowly crept toward him with drool dripping down their sharp canines. Left in tears from the fear, King Bao decided to grasp on straws. He knew there was only one thing he could do right now.

“I- I- I accept. Please help me! Help me! Beyond the Heavens Empire! If you do, then I will reevaluate my views of you! I will even aid the Beyond the Heavens Empire in your internal and external affairs!”

[Arcas Kingdom’s King Bao is requesting help from Beyond the Heavens Empire!]

[Beyond the Heavens Empire’s Guardian God Obren warps the people of the Beyond the Heavens Empire!]

The kings and emperors felt a bit of anticipation at that moment. Perhaps Spear God Ben or Brod would appear to save King Bao.

However, the one that appeared was a very unexpected person.

“Have you been well, Your Majesty?”

“Keller? You- how?!”

The man who appeared in a flash of light was neither Brod nor Spear God Ben. Instead, it was Keller, hailed as the Dragon Spear Man in the Arcas Empire. He had received a thorough education from Haze and Ellie before coming here.

He looked at King Bao and said, “His Majesty, the emperor of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, said with tears in his eyes...”

“T-tears?”

“Go and save the kings and emperors you have served before.”

“...!”

For King Bao, hearing those words from a subordinate he had cherished in the past was much more touching and convincing than hearing them from Minhyuk. However, King Bao knew that Keller would be unable to do anything about the two assassins and the pack of werewolves before him.

At that moment, a dark elf assassin and a werewolf charged toward them.

[Guardian God Obren has bestowed upon you his Duplicated Blessings!]

[The Duplicated Blessings can duplicate whatever buff effect is in effect!]

[All of your stats have increased by 12%!]

[Your Dragon Spearmanship has increased by 1 level!]

[Your resistance to abnormal status has increased by 12%!]

Of course, Keller remembered what Ellie had taught him: the *Attention-seeking Method* to get the attention of all the people present.

“I will break your arrogance and chop your head off with my Dragon Spear.”

‘...K-Keller. Y-you– What’s the matter with you?!’

King Bao could not understand how Keller and his terrible line would be able to stop these enemies alone.

The moment Keller swung his spear, blood spurted out from the bodies of the two charging dark elf assassins.

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

“Heooooook!” King Bao shouted in surprise.

But Keller did not stop there. He immediately used the second chapter of Ellie’s Attention Seeking Method. Keller looked at his enemies with his noble, majestic, and cold eyes—which closely resembled the look Ellie had shown them before—as he raised his spear and slowly said, “Kneel before my Dragon Spear.”

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

And once again, with his spear, he stabbed the necks of the dozens of dark werewolves that surrounded them and made them collapse on the ground.

King Bao could only watch with wide-open eyes.