

## Gourmet 961

### Chapter 961

Nerva was considered a nerd in his youth. He liked to read books just as much as he exercised. He possessed a calm, beautiful, and kind heart and was excellent at everything he did. Because of that, he drew the envy and jealousy of the other Battle God prospects training alongside him.

Even though Nerva was kind and good-natured, everyone still tried to harass him just because he was good at everything. And the same thing happened on that day. One of the trainees raised his leg and tripped Nerva, who was quietly reading his book. Another trainee threw an egg at him as if he found the confused Nerva funny.

Crack–

Nerva grew furious when he saw the egg trickling down his forehead. “You! What are you guys doing...”

But several eggs rained down on him before he could even finish his words. It was as if they had been waiting for him. Now covered with raw eggs, Nerva could not understand why the other trainees did this to him. He could only look at them blankly while thinking sadly, *‘Why am I being treated like this?’*

Crack–

Crack–

The trainees stopped throwing eggs when they suddenly realized that a man had appeared before Nerva. The man glared coldly at them and said, “Do you want me to break your legs?”

“...N– No.”

“Sorry, Brod.”

Brod, just like Nerva, also excelled in everything. No, he was even more outstanding than Nerva. However, his character and attitude were utterly different from Nerva's. If Nerva were the typical nerd, Brod would be the type of person who could not stomach seeing injustice and would crush it if he witnessed one.

“Let me see you doing this again, and I won't let you go.”

Everyone ran away after hearing Brod's bluff. Once they disappeared, Brod and Nerva went to the showers to wash.

“Hey.”

When Brod was about to leave after washing up, he heard Nerva call him from behind.

Nerva, in a roundabout way, said, “Someday... Someday, I will also save you when you're in danger.”

That day, Nerva made a vow to Brod, who was smiling at him. From that day forth, the two became close friends.

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Nerva, whose left arm was now missing, slowly approached Duke Vlad.

Brod's eyes widened when he saw Nerva's back going further away. He shouted, "Nerva! Nerva! NERVAAAAAAA!!!"

Brod was furious. It did not matter what he would do; even if Nerva died for his sake, he would never forgive him. And even if he died, Brod would make sure to chase him down in hell and torment him. He was sure that Nerva knew this. So, why was he doing this?

Nerva did not answer. He continued to walk toward Duke Vlad, recalling his memories and the vow he had made in the showers.

"Your- Your Majesty... Why are you attacking me?" Vlad stuttered as he hurriedly tried to stop the bleeding from the severe injury inflicted on the back of his head. At the same time, he was confused and dumbfounded. He was sure that Nerva was drunk, but there were no signs of intoxication on his face at all.

Nerva was a powerhouse that was comparable to Brod and Duke Vlad. He did not become the emperor of the Luvien Empire and the Battle God's Sword for nothing.

"Wiping out all of the Beyond the Heavens Empire members for your sake, Your Majesty..."

"How long are you going to continue with this act?" Nerva said coldly as he looked deeply at Duke Vlad.

Nerva witnessed Duke Vlad's fingers moving as thousands of Disses fell from the sky. He already harbored doubts about Duke Vlad, which was why he could see it. He knew full well that Duke Vlad could not use any magic. Even the Swords of the Gods were confused when they saw Duke Vlad use magic.

But Duke Vlad continued with his act. "I don't know what you're talking about. Everything that I'm doing is for your sake, Your Majesty."

With those words, Nerva said, "My beloved faithful vassal, Duke Vlad. As the emperor of the Luvien Empire, I command you to offer your neck to me."

If he were Nerva's faithful servant, he would give his neck to his emperor without any doubt. Was it unreasonable? Yes. The relationship between an emperor and his vassal could be this unreasonable.

Nerva continued to walk toward Vlad. When he reached him, he stopped and swung his sword at Vlad's neck without hesitation.

Then, Duke Vlad cackled. "It seems like I have to change my plans."

A blast of electric current surged from Duke Vlad's left hand, which he used to block Nerva's sword.

Slash—!

Nerva moved his sword and cut Duke Vlad's back.

Meanwhile, the confused Swords of the Gods only understood the situation when they saw Duke Vlad attack Nerva.

“Protect His Majesty!”

“Hurry! Move!”

“That’s treason!”

No, perhaps it could not be considered as treason.

Duke Vlad’s body was engulfed in flames.

Crackle—!

When the flames disappeared, what appeared was a completely different face from Duke Vlad. The Magic Swordsman Arumbe, who was in the form of an old man, appeared in front of everyone.

[Magic Swordsman Arumbe. Level 837.]

The most significant reason why Brod suffered severe injuries from Arumbe was because he had been careless. Nevertheless, his level was still astonishingly high. But Nerva did not even flinch or shrink in front of him. Of course, he was at a significant disadvantage, especially since he had lost an arm. But this did not change that he was the emperor of the most substantial empire.

Rumble—!

Five Hellfires shot out of Arumbe’s fingertips. However, Nerva took two simple steps to avoid them and split the rest with his sword. The only reason why Nerva lost his left arm from the Hellfire earlier was because he saved Brod. But now that he did not need to protect someone? The rate at which Arumbe cast his Hellfires could not keep up with his movements.

If Brod had been hailed as the *wolf* in the past, then Nerva would have been the *hawk*. This was because his swordsmanship was closely related to and took on the form of a hawk.

“Plade Swordsmanship. Chapter 3.”

The Luvien Empire’s Emperor rarely jumped on the frontlines. However, that would not change the fact that he was one of the NPCs at the highest position in the current era.

“Hunting Prey.”

Boooooooooom—!

A sword light stretched out from Nerva’s sword and instantly pierced through Arumbe’s chest. It was as fast and as strong as a hawk.

Arumbe’s face grew ugly when Nerva narrowed the distance between them, putting pressure on him like no other.

Crackle—!

The power of the Fire Storm appeared and wrapped around Arumbe’s sword. The rampant fiery energy tried to drag Nerva as it danced on the blade of his sword. But when the fiery energy was about to drag him in, something pecked and tore Arumbe’s neck.

“Cast Hunting.”

Dozens of hawks flew out of Nerva’s sword and soared to the skies.

“Kree-eee-ear!” The dozens of hawks screeched loudly as they circled in the sky.

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

And then, they shot toward Arumbe before he could even drag Nerva to his side.

The entire world was left in shock, their breaths reeling as they witnessed the dignity and majesty of a true emperor.

But contrary to everyone’s hope, there was a frown on Nerva’s face. He thought, ‘*The situation is dire.*’

Meanwhile, Arumbe had created several shields to defend against the dozens of hawks that shot toward him from Nerva’s Cast Hunting.

And Arumbe? He was extremely furious. He shouted, “Trash!”

Arumbe had been waiting for a long time for Helenia’s complete revival. He thought he could become one of the gods in the new world with the mad Battle God firmly held at his hands. This was why he could stomach staying in the shell of Duke Vlad for a very long time.

But now? All of his plans had gone awry. He had to kill everyone here to allow Helenia to descend completely.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—!

An enormous magic circle appeared with a swing of Arumbe’s sword. The magic circle was so vast that it included the fallen and gasping Brod. This magic circle was the Magic Field. Once the Magic Field has been cast, a mage’s casting time would be reduced in half while his magical damage would increase by 1.5x. Since the one that cast the Magic Field was none other than Helenia’s disciple, the effects were much more shocking.

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

Hundreds of magical attacks flew toward Nerva. Their speed, size, and number were far more significant than before.

‘*This is dangerous.*’ This was what Nerva’s gut was telling him.

“Hawk’s Plight.”

Nerva’s steps were light, but he moved at a fast speed. This movement allowed him to escape from the onslaught of the magical attacks. However, he still failed to evade some magical attacks. This was because they were the type of magic that would hit their target no matter what.

“Ugh!” Nerva groaned when he was hit with a powerful explosion. But instead of going away, he turned around and looked at Brod.

He could see that Brod was also receiving the brunt of the attacks. Perhaps Brod might die anytime soon. Just when Nerva thought that he had to kill Arumbe quickly, Arumbe appeared behind Nerva and stabbed him in his chest after weaving through the explosions.

“Urk!” Nerva groaned as he staggered on his feet and vomited a mouthful of blood.

Of course, Arumbe did not miss the opportunity and stabbed Nerva continuously with his sword imbued with lightning magic.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—!

“Keuaaaaaaack!” screams were ripped out of Nerva’s mouth. He suffered severe and irreparable damage from the attack. The worst part? The power of lightning put him in a stunned state.

Crackle, crackle, crackle—!

After inflicting severe damage on Nerva and Brod, Arumbe moved to finish this battle. He summoned tens of thousands of fireballs all around him. The fireballs glittered and sparkled like fireflies flying in the dead of the night.

The sight was extremely shocking. This was Arumbe’s innate ingenuity that even Helenia coveted. He could cast countless Explosion magic, keep them still, and only allow them to explode at his will. If all of them exploded at the same time, they would be able to exert power that was comparable to Helenia’s Meteor or Hellfire. However, these suppressed fireballs should remain neutral for ten seconds.

Magic spread out from Arumbe’s fingertips as he raised his hand and cast a Fire Wall that enclosed the area around them. With this, no one could interrupt him for ten seconds.

Arumbe pointed his finger at Nerva, who was finally released from his stunned state and was about to move.

“Bang– Bang, bang, bang, bang.”

Nerva was sent rolling on the ground and coughing up blood.

Eight... Seven... Six...

This countdown would also signal the triumphant arrival of Arumbe’s shards to Helenia’s embrace. Now that all the troublesome and annoying ones were gone, things would be easier for Arumbe.

“Fufufufufufufufufu...!” Arumbe, the old mage, cackled. He was a human but wanted to become a god and stand by Helenia.

Five.

But there was one thing that Arumbe should not have overlooked. He was only wary of Nerva and Brod because they were the strongest out of everyone present.

A whisper was heard from the fortress's entrance saying, “Transcendence.”

Everyone received a restriction wherein they could not receive any *buffs* whenever they were around Helenia’s Fragments. Of course, this was the only power that she had restricted. But Transcendence was an entirely different concept from buffs.

Transcendence was a skill that allowed Minhyuk to absorb the amount of damage that he had received and give him a burst of power in one go. The amount of transcendence that he could gather would depend on the level and strength of the enemy, and it could give him a buff equivalent to buffs given by God-grade dishes once triggered.

And these were the notifications that rang in Minhyuk's ears when he tried to activate the skill:

[Helenia's magic has restricted any use of buffs!]

[Transcendence is a power that cannot be restricted and suppressed!]

Rumble—!

Black energy blasted and engulfed Minhyuk's entire body as he left the entrance to the fortress. As if Alexander was waiting for this moment, he swiftly summoned his Weapon Corps to fill the gap that Minhyuk had left behind. Alexander only had a few minutes to fill in this gap. And this was only made possible because the Swords of the Gods jumped into the fray.

[You have activated Transcendence!]

[You have gone beyond your limits and transcended to another realm!]

[You have gone beyond your limits and transcended to another realm!]

[You have gone beyond your limits...!]

[You have gone beyond your limits...!]

But the notifications did not end there.

[The Transcendence's buff effects have now been applied!]

[All of your stats have increased by 59%!]

[All of your attack power has increased by 37%!]

[All of your defensive power has increased by 45%!]

[All of your skill levels have increased by +3!]

[Your resistance to abnormal statuses has increased by 40%!]

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

[Transcendence will remain in effect for thirty seconds!]

Shwaaaaaaaaa—!

Minhyuk, who had not used any defensive skill even in the face of danger, quickly triggered his Absolute Defense, which would last for seven seconds. He had been saving his defensive skills just in case the owner of the mysterious footprints arrived, and he arrived.

Minhyuk took out a potion while running.

Gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp—

Arumbe, who caught sight of Minhyuk trying to get past his Fire Wall, shot dozens of magical attacks at Minhyuk. Among those magical attacks was Hellfire. However, none of the attacks that he sent inflicted any damage on Minhyuk.

Arumbe looked at Minhyuk in doubt while continuing the countdown in his head.

Three... two...

However, a mage's most significant disadvantage was that the attack would fail if their casting were interrupted.

“Sword of Frenzy.”

Spurt—!

Minhyuk's sword went straight through Arumbe's chest. At the same time, the notifications from the potion that he drank rang in his ears.

[You have consumed the Single Target EXP Increase Potion!]

[You can obtain 50 times more EXP if you kill your target!]

The time to level up like crazy had arrived.

Chapter 962

Before Arumbe launched tens of thousands of fireballs, Minhyuk had a bitter conversation with Alexander. He said, “How long can you hold on?”

“Two minutes at the very least and three minutes at most,” Alexander replied.

Alexander had shown Minhyuk the excellent skill *Weapon Corps* during their competition in the Infinite Battlefield. That was why Minhyuk knew he could hold on for a few minutes even if he left the entrance to the fortress. On top of that, Alexander intended to use all of his powers to deal with the fragments once Minhyuk left.

Minhyuk said, “I'm sorry, Alexander.”

“It's fine.” Alexander shook his head.

He knew why Minhyuk was apologizing. It was because the man was pushing him out so that he could protect Brod. But that was not all. His “I'm sorry.” had an entirely different meaning. But that was fine. Arumbe was someone that they had to kill right here and now.

“I'll do my best.”

They needed to stop Arumbe, but they also could not forget to stop the *shards* from reaching Helenia's arms. Minhyuk analyzed the current situation with a clear and rational mind. He and Alexander were already very exhausted. It would not be strange for them to be forced to logout at any given moment. The Swords of the Gods were also in chaos, not to mention Brod, who was still lying on the ground. And the same was true for Nerva.

*‘I don't know why they're helping us.’*

But even if they killed Arumbe, Minhyuk knew they would still be in danger. That was why Minhyuk planned to detonate the bomb that Bichor had installed inside the fortress.

“Then, I'm leaving him to you,” Minhyuk said. He was referring to Brod. What Minhyuk wanted Alexander to do was to protect Brod if ever he was in a place where the aftermath of the bomb's explosion could reach him.

Of course, Minhyuk would not miss this opportunity. He took the Single Target EXP Increase Potion. No one had reached Level 650 yet. A rough estimate said it would take at least half a year

for someone to reach that level. Not only would he be the first to reach it, but he was also in a situation where he could obtain the Food God's new power if he could complete his plans.

However, the truth was that Minhyuk, who was running toward Arumbe with his Absolute Defense, was afraid.

*'If we can't stop them, then...'*

The future waiting for the players was where Helenia destroyed Athenae.

*'If we can stop them, then...'*

The players would grow rapidly to kill Helenia, who failed to descend with her full powers.

Stab—

The Sword of Frenzy stabbed Arumbe's heart. And because he could accurately and successfully hit a vital point, the effects of the skill were triggered. Twelve additional attacks with 500% more damage that has an 80% chance of ignoring an enemy's defense ran rampant in Arumbe's body.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash—!

"Keuaaaaaaaaack!" Arumbe screamed. The gruesome sound resonated all over the world.

One.

The tens of thousands of Fire Balls slowly disappeared from the air. Seeing this, Arumbe grew furious. He was angry that a human, which he assumed he need not be wary of, successfully landed an attack on him.

"Bastard!" Arumbe shouted as he tried to attack Minhyuk with his magic, just as he was about to pull out his sword.

But Minhyuk moved a step faster. Right now, Minhyuk had the power of Transcendence coursing through his veins. At this very moment, neither Brod nor Nerva was his match. Perhaps he even possessed the power to cut down Helenia.

Swoosh—!

Minhyuk flew past Arumbe. And the skill that he used? The Sword of Carnage. With the power of Transcendence amplifying its effects, this skill, which could cut the enemy dozens of times in just a split second, exerted a greater power.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash—!

Screams were ripped out of Arumbe's mouth as the countless sword lights attacked him non-stop.

"Keuaaaaaaaaack!"

As the attacks landed on Arumbe's body, a very unusual force allowed him to automatically send a magical attack toward his enemy, which came at Minhyuk.

Rumble—!

A powerful lightning bolt fell from the sky and devoured Minhyuk.

Bang—!

Although the attack created a massive explosion, it did not inflict any damage on Minhyuk. When Arumbe, the genius mage, and swordsman, saw this, he could not help but be dumbfounded.

*‘What the hell is this bastard?!’*

Arumbe had only heard about this human as a god who loved to eat. He was the emperor who went against the Luvien Empire, and the Battle God favored him. To him, it was just *that*.

He believed that this human was nothing compared to him, who would trample and put the gods under his feet, and Helenia, who would destroy everything that she would hold in her palms. That was why he did not even pay attention to him.

Slash—!

Minhyuk slashed the staggering Arumbe.

“Keuaaaaaaaaack!”

The genius Arumbe, who did not allow anyone to land a successful attack on him, was screaming constantly from Minhyuk’s non-stop attacks.

*Two... One.* And with that, Minhyuk’s Absolute Defense was lifted.

The look in Arumbe’s eyes changed when he saw the invincible force surrounding Minhyuk’s body disappear. He stretched out his hands and spread his thin and slender fingers. At the same time, dozens of bloody red Disses fell from the sky. They were much stronger and more prominent than the Disses that Ali usually cast, falling straight toward Minhyuk.

“Keuhahahahahahaha! Ahahahahahahaha! Impudent bastard!”

The power that allowed the man in front of Arumbe to use an unknown barrier was a fantastic power he had never seen or heard. However, Arumbe was confident that once that power was gone, this man in front of him would be no match against him.

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

But even though Minhyuk was constantly stabbed by the Disses falling from the sky, he did not falter. He continued to walk toward the staggering and stumbling Arumbe.

Stab—!

A Diss shot through Minhyuk’s chest. However, he continued with a blank look on his face.

“...?”

Arumbe could not understand why his magic was not doing much damage to the man in front of him.

With the current state that Minhyuk was in, perhaps it would be safe to say that he was every bit of an opponent to both Helenia and Arumbe.

Minhyuk had consumed countless excellent elixirs, medicines, and ingredients that increased his magical defensive power to a level that was beyond anyone’s imagination. Such magical defensive

power would triple with the equipment of the Transcendental's Armor and quadruple with the Black Dragon Armor.

To top it off, Minhyuk could recover some of his HP, which had already fallen below 20%, by attacking Arumbe. Unlike the fragments turned shards, Arumbe was a living and breathing person. Because of that, he was able to trigger his Slaughterer's Absorption.

Boom– Boom, boom, boom, boom–!

Arumbe swung his arm like crazy as he tried to bomb Minhyuk with his magical attacks. However, Minhyuk just continued to press forward. Of course, the magical damage that Minhyuk was receiving was instantly reduced. However, he still suffered greatly from the non-stop attacks that came his way. If Arumbe had not been a living and breathing person, he would have been forced to log out a long time ago.

“Don't– Don't come here...!” Arumbe shouted, fear coloring his eyes.

Arumbe knew fear. He had felt it when he faced Helenia and Brod. But what he was feeling this time was a completely unfamiliar feeling. It was a feeling that was far worse than fear. It was his instincts screaming at him to run so he could survive.

Crackle–!

Three Hellfires fell and devoured Minhyuk all at once. Minhyuk simply walked out of the Hellfires and grabbed Arumbe by the collar. Then, he said, “Calamity.”

“...!” Arumbe's eyes grew wide.

Calamity was a skill that Minhyuk had used once earlier. But he was using it again now? This was only possible because Minhyuk had used his Save skill to store Calamity. Why? Because Minhyuk had judged earlier that it was necessary to use Calamity, a skill with terrible penalties, twice.

Of course, Calamity was a power that could be dispelled. But even if someone successfully used Dispel on it, they could not erase everything. Only some of the swords from this attack would disappear, and the rest would remain.

A burning sword fell from the sky and slammed straight into Arumbe, who was being held by the collar.

Stab–!

“Keuaaaaaaaaaack!”

Minhyuk finally let go of Arumbe's collar and increased the distance between them using Like the Wind as Arumbe screamed his lungs out.

[Helenia's magic protects Arumbe!]

Around a hundred large and sturdy shields appeared to protect Arumbe. But the fiery swords slammed into the shields and broke them one after another.

Clang–!

Clang–!

Clang–!

Crackle—!!!

Crackle—!

A blazing flame erupted and devoured the surrounding area. Ali, who Minhyuk had thrown inside the fortress earlier, quickly ran before Brod and cast a barrier that protected him and the man.

*‘Ali’s there.’* Minhyuk breathed a sigh of relief. With Ali’s barrier, Brod would be protected.

However, Minhyuk’s expression grew twisted when he saw Arumbe.

*‘Shit... He’s a mage, but his HP is this high?!’*

Even after receiving Calamity directly, Arumbe did not die and was still alive and well. Of course, he looked utterly horrendous. His entire body was charred black, with some places cracking and oozing blood.

As he walked forward to finish the twitching Arumbe, he was greeted with a notification.

[Helenia protects her disciple, Arumbe!]

Swoosh—!

“Ugh!”

A Diss shot out from within the fortress and pierced through Minhyuk’s chest. Minhyuk groaned louder when his HP fell below 20% with just that one attack. The damage was ridiculous to the point that it overshadowed the armor effect of the Transcendental’s Armor.

[Helenia has cast Dispel!]

Shwaaaaaaa—!

Minhyuk’s face grew even uglier when he saw Ali’s barrier disappear without a trace. He gritted his teeth as he pulled out a switch from his inventory.

“Minhyuk!” Alexander shouted. His entire body was covered in blood as he ran inside the fortress.

Minhyuk grabbed Arumbe by the collar and started to run toward the fortress. He was no hero. All he wanted was to protect those who were precious to him. He wanted to protect the world of Athenae, the world that gave new hope to someone like him who was dying from his eating addiction. The very same world that shone a bright light on his world, which was filled with gloom and darkness.

“Uwoooooooh!” Minhyuk shouted. He turned to look at Brod as he continued to run to the fortress.

If all their plans worked out, then he would also be able to save Brod. However, not everything would go as planned. Such was a human’s life.

“Ke- Kekekekeke!” Arumbe cackled despite being held by the collar. Then, without missing a gap, he triggered an Explosion. He risked it even though he would receive damage, too.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—!

Minhyuk, swept away by the explosion, was sent flying far away. As for the switch in his hands? It was also sent flying in another direction. Then, Arumbe targeted Alexander, who was running toward Brod. Alexander was also on the verge of being forced to log out.

Ping—!

A Diss shot out and pierced through Alexander’s chest in just a split second.

“Urk!” Alexander groaned. His pupils were shaking as he looked toward Minhyuk. Not long after, he turned gray and disappeared from everyone’s sight. At the same time, the remaining 2,000 shards began to pour inside the fortress like a river flowing from a collapsed dam. They all rushed toward Helenia.

Minhyuk, still lying on the floor, looked for the switch. The switch fell near the fallen Brod. Brod, gasping for breath, used the last bit of his strength to reach for the switch.

“Brod! This is an order! Do not touch that switch!”

If the bomb exploded immediately, even Brod would not be spared. And Minhyuk? He would be able to survive. After all, he could use Let’s Have a Meal’s barrier and get away with it. But it was different for Brod. Brod was one of Minhyuk’s most beloved and precious vassals. The man was a complete fool when it came to Minhyuk. And if he pushed that switch, he would die.

Brod’s hands were almost at the switch.

Arumbe, who had fallen on the ground, laughed maniacally when he saw his shards almost reaching Helenia’s transparent wall.

“Ke- Kekekekekekkeke! Keuhahahahahaha!”

But then, someone appeared and kicked Minhyuk away.

“Kghhk!” Minhyuk groaned. The kick sent him flying out of the fortress.

As for the one who kicked him? Well, he also did not know why he did that. Why did he protect the emperor of the Beyond the Heavens Empire?

*‘Maybe it’s because he’s the one that he wants to protect.’*

The man was bleeding all over his body. However, it was much worse with his missing left arm. His wound had reopened, and blood flowed non-stop from what was left of his left arm. However, he continued to move forward and arrived one step faster than Brod to the switch.

He knelt and stared at Brod for quite some time. Brod looked at the man before him with confusion and doubt. But without any expression on his face, Nerva grabbed Brod by the collar and threw him out of the fortress.

“Ugh!”

Nerva quickly picked up the switch that fell on the ground. Then, he turned to look at Brod, who was still staring at him from outside the fortress. Honestly, he did not even know why he was doing this.

Vwoooooooooooooong—!

A powerful force soared from Nerva’s body and destroyed the entrance to the fortress.

Rumble—!

As the rubble fell and slowly closed off the entrance, Nerva saw Brod’s expression. Nerva could sense the question, ‘*Why are you doing this?*’ in Brod’s expression aside from the confusion.

At that moment, Nerva recalled the words of his most precious, hardworking, and beloved vassal, Rālszd.

*—I hope you can smile brightly.*

Nerva stared at Brod until the rubble blocked the entrance, and his figure disappeared. However, a bright smile was plastered on Nerva’s face, a smile that had now been completely hidden from everyone else’s view.

Chapter 963

The entrance to Beauden Fortress had collapsed, trapping the shards that had rushed inside the fortress to get to Helenia’s embrace.

Brod, who watched the rubble fall until it completely covered the entrance, had caught a glimpse of the bright smile on Nerva’s face. The sight left him staring blankly at the collapsed entrance for quite a long time.

“Your Majesty!!!”

“Your Majesty!!!”

“N- No. This can’t be!!!”

The Swords of the Gods were all shocked and disconcerted by the sudden events. And the same was true for Minhyuk.

Nerva was the greatest villain during Athenae’s Second Era. He was a greedy emperor who had taken and plundered many things to establish his empire as the greatest. He was the type of person who was willing to do anything and everything that he could just to achieve his goals. But now, this man has done something completely ridiculous. He had chosen to *sacrifice* himself for the sake of others.

Minhyuk gulped dryly as he stared at the fortress’s entrance with a puzzled expression.

**BOOM!**

A massive explosion engulfed the entire fortress.

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Right before the bomb exploded.

Rumble!

A sense of relief washed over Nerva as he leaned his back on the walls of the collapsing fortress. He felt so relaxed as if he had put down the heavy baggage he had been carrying.

However, Nerva's body still trembled and shook as he looked at the switch in his hands. No one in the world was unafraid of death. And the emperor of the most significant and strongest empire was no exception to this.

The leaning Nerva slowly slid down from the fortress walls. Not too far from him, Arumbe, the mage they had been fighting earlier, was gasping and trying to catch his breath. He was looking at Nerva. The two of them could see the shards struggling to break down the small fortress made of shields that trapped Helenia inside.

Crack, crack, crack—!

Not long after, the fortress made of shields began to crack. Nerva closed his eyes and murmured, "It seems like this will be my end?"

Death would come to him soon. It might come in a few tens of seconds at the least or perhaps in a few minutes at most. The thought brought forth a complicated feeling in Nerva. He was Nerva, the greedy tyrant who plundered everyone and tried to bring the entire continent under his rule. Yet this very same emperor would end up killing himself.

Nerva hoisted himself up, murmuring, "I thought I would create an empire that would help the world become peaceful."

He did not want to build an empire that caused wars. He wanted to build an empire that would stand at the center of the continent and prevent all wars so that he could bring peace to all of the kingdoms and empires in the world.

"I wanted to build a world where all humans would help each other in need. A world where kingdoms and empires would hold hands and be at peace."

However, all these were just things he lamented before his death.

"One day, I realized..."

He could not create such a peaceful world. If such a strong empire existed, the kingdoms and empires would try to chip away at that empire instead of holding hands and promoting peace. So, what should he do, then?

"I thought I had to use force to pressure them."

It was so they would not even think about taking away what was in his empire. And that was how Nerva created the Luvien Empire. However, his essence and the main reason he made such an empire grew blurred as time passed. He grew greedier the more his empire grew stronger.

He wanted to get more. He tried to stand at a higher place. His wish to create a peaceful world slowly faded away.

"I became a monster."

It was just as Brod said. He had become a monster that could no longer turn back to how he once was.

A bitter smile flashed on Nerva's face. He was pretty fortunate that he would have this kind of death even though he had become such a monster.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—!

The cracks on the small fortress of shields grew larger and larger. Nerva trembled. He exhaled as he looked at the growing cracks. And with a faint smile, he raised his hand and tried to press the switch.

“That’s f\*cked up.”

“...?”

An unknown voice rang in his ears. When Nerva turned to look in the direction of the voice, he saw a very familiar face. The man was standing atop the shield-made fortress and sporting a frown as he looked at the shards banging frantically on the walls that he had created.

The man jumped off of the fortress and went past the crazy shards. The fragments, who only thought of reaching Helenia's arms, did not attack him. They did not even pay him any mind.

“It’s so revolting. I can’t stand it. You’re a monster, but in the end, you will be hailed as the unfortunate emperor who died a beautiful death. Is that what you intended to do?”

This man was once a member of the Swords of the Gods’ Second Knight Order. But now, he has blended in and joined the Beyond the Heavens Empire. This man was none other than Valentino.

The relationship between Nerva and Valentino was filled with resentment and hate.

Nerva, who had already put everything down, looked at Valentino bitterly. He said, “Congratulations on successfully becoming the God of Shields.”

Even though a vassal of another empire was cursing at him, Nerva graciously forgave him and was even very understanding of his words and actions. After all, if he considered the wrongs that he had done, then it was given that this would be how he felt about him.

“You f\*cking bastard. I can’t stomach this sh\*t. This is so disgusting.”

Valentino, who sounded so cold-hearted then, was trying to think quickly. He had learned a lot since joining the Beyond the Heavens Empire. He had learned quite a lot while watching Minhyuk. As he watched Minhyuk, he realized why he, a single player, became the emperor who led millions of troops and was respected by all of his subjects. He was trying to think like *Minhyuk* and analyze the current situation.

*‘If Nerva dies here, then will the Beyond the Heavens Empire and the entire world of Athenae welcome it?’*

Valentino knew he should not look at it with just a single perspective. He had to look at it from both sides.

Many would rejoice. That was for sure. The kingdoms, empires, and players who held death grudges and resentment against Nerva would be happy. Perhaps they would even cheer, saying, *‘He died to block Helenia.’* But after that? Then, what?

*‘Perhaps the entire world would become even more chaotic compared to now.’*

If the emperor of the Luvien Empire died without leaving a will, then his empire would be thrown into chaos. Perhaps cries and shrieks would ring loudly in the Luvien Empire as they tried to fight over the emperor’s throne.

Of course, the other kingdoms and empires would take advantage of this and try to trample on the Luvien Empire. First, the kingdoms and empires that had allied with them only agreed because they forced them. People like them would do anything to eat away at the Luvien Empire.

There would be no end to the war in Athenae. And the damage? The players would most likely shoulder it.

*‘It will be far more disastrous than when the Luvien Empire first appeared.’*

Valentino pondered deeply. He tried to imagine how he would approach the situation if he were in Minhyuk’s shoes.

*‘Then, what if Nerva does not die?’*

This would also be a problem. Would he clean up his act and begin anew? Valentino did not know that. There was a chance that if Nerva came back alive, he would reign just like he had in the past.

Whatever choice he picked, the results would still be disastrous. So, to turn the situation in their favor, Valentino thought of a trick.

*‘I feel like my head’s going to explode.’*

Was Minhyuk like this every single day? Did he have to go through countless situations and outcomes before he made a decision? To be honest, Valentino was in awe.

Then, he turned to Nerva and said, “If you want to apologize and have them forgive you, you must live.”

Although Valentino said those words, he wondered if Nerva would genuinely change. But what if he could suggest a way to get through this without dying? After all, it was natural for people to want to live in the first place.

Nerva also understood the situation. There was the mage, who had almost zero mana, and Valentino. There was no need for Nerva to press the button himself. The fact that there was no need for him to die started to sprout in him. This was a human’s instinct for survival.

“However...”

Was it better for Nerva to live or to die? Valentino, who had been pondering this matter, finally gave the answer he had thought of.

“Step down from your position as the emperor.”

“...!”

The thought that Valentino came up with this idea was shocking. The emperor would not die but would have to step down from his position and name another successor. If Nerva had been left to live, then he would have been able to prevent the chaos that would come in the Luvien Empire and the world.

Of course, the foundations of the Luvien Empire would be greatly shaken. After all, their emperor would suddenly be changed. They would need a period where they had to adapt. But as long as Nerva was alive, the Luvien Empire would continue to stand as a nation and maintain its processes.

*‘The Beyond the Heavens Empire will develop quickly.’*

The shaking of the foundation of the Luvien Empire would set the stage for the growth of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. If the Beyond the Heavens Empire took this opportunity to develop further while the Luvien Empire was still in the adaptation period, then they could create an empire comparable to Luvien.

Valentino’s solution was an idea that looked exceptionally far into the future. But that was not the end. At this moment, he had become “Minhyuk.”

“Compensate the Beyond the Heavens Empire with fifty million platinum and give them one chance to use the Luvien Empire’s Treasure House.”

Unless one was a fool, there was no way that they did not know that there were shocking items inside the Luvien Empire’s Treasure House.

“And before stepping down from your position as an emperor, sign a decree that will declare a brief cease-fire with the Beyond the Heavens Empire. And compensate me, Valentino, with a God-rank artifact made by the finest blacksmiths of the Luvien Empire.”

Valentino did not even forget to seek compensation for what he was about to do. All of the things that he asked were of enormous value.

“That’s quite a huge price for someone who would live even if they died.”

That was true. Valentino demanded all the things that were thousands of times greater than the worth of his death. However, this decision had greatly shaken Nerva’s own decision. Nerva gently caressed the switch in his hands.

But the thing that helped his decision immensely was something else.

*‘I haven’t repaid everything yet.’*

If he died now, then Brod would only see this as him running away from his sins.

Crack, crack, crack, crack—!

“Kihyeeeeeeeeek!”

“Khieeeeeeeek!”

“Keuhaaaaaaaack!”

Thud, thud, thud, thud—!

The Shield Fortress was now on the verge of collapse. Nerva, who had been caressing the switch, finally made a decision. He slowly stood up and handed the switch to Valentino.

Valentino exhaled a trembling breath, thinking, *‘This feels far too realistic for a game.’*

Valentino felt like he was genuinely going to die at this very moment. Then, walking toward Mage Ali, Nerva looked back at him and said, “...You have grown.”

Nerva knew the character, skills, and everything related to the knights of the Swords of the Gods better than anybody else. Although he was a tyrant, he had climbed to his position because of how observant he was.

Valentino grinned. “Because I now serve a better emperor.”

“...”

Nerva looked at Valentino for quite a while before nodding his head.

*‘So this is Emperor Minhyuk’s power?’*

The man was completely different from him. Nerva leaned his exhausted body on Ali. Fortunately, Ali had already recovered enough MP to cast a Mass Teleport. Ali held Nerva’s hand.

[Sharing your perspective with the broadcasting stations!]

Valentino knew that at this very moment, he was the protagonist of the story. He would be the one who received the attention of the entire world. The moment the notification rang, his perspective was broadcast to the screens of viewers worldwide.

*‘Perhaps someone will be very disappointed in me.’*

When Valentino was executed in the Luvien Empire and thrown into the Prison of Indolence, many who believed in him must have grown disappointed. When he joined the Beyond the Heavens Empire, many people pointed their fingers at him and said, *‘He’s someone that will betray his friends so that he could live.’*

But at this very moment, Valentino was the one who was most faithful to his duty.

“Kihyeeeeeeck!”

“Kihiiiiiiiik!”

“Keuhaaaaaaack!”

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—!

Everyone following his perspective saw his Shield Fortress start to crumble and collapse. And in this place where he stood alone, Valentino did what he was supposed to do. He became their shield that would protect and defend them from harm.

“I...”

Baaaaaaaang—!

The walls of the Shield Fortress slowly collapsed. The shards opened their arms wide and cackled with joy as they ran to Helenia's arms.

"Kirerererereck!"

"Kiheeheeheehee!"

"Kihyaaaaaack!"

"Kyaaaaaaaack!"

With a slight smile on his face, Valentino mumbled, "...the God of Shields."

**BOOM!**

A massive explosion erupted and devoured the entire Beauden Fortress.

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Rumble—!

Beauden Fortress slowly started to fall and collapse. With this explosive power, even Helenia, at her full power, would be blown away all at once.

One of the reasons why Bichor's bombs were so amazing was because no matter how powerful the explosion was, it would never go beyond the Beauden Fortress. He reduced the bombs' radius of effect to create a more powerful and destructive bomb.

"Your Majesty...?" One of the Swords of the Gods mumbled in disbelief as he collapsed. It seemed like he had lost strength in his legs.

"Your Majesty!!!" Another Swords of the Gods member cried out loud as he watched the fortress fall.

Minhyuk was also very surprised when he saw the fortress collapse. He thought, '*There's no way that Nerva would sacrifice himself.*'

To be honest, Minhyuk did not feel like everything happening before him was real either. However, the notifications ringing in his ears made him realize it was the truth.

[You have killed Arumbe!]

[You have obtained 129, 965 platinum.]

[The Single Target EXP Increase Potion's effects had been applied! EXP acquired will increase!]

[EXP acquired cannot be measured!]

[EXP acquired cannot be measured!]

Minhyuk looked at the notifications in confusion. But then, he thought, '*That's quite understandable.*'

Arumbe was the main antagonist in the hunt for Helenia's Fragments. He was also an NPC with a high level exceeding Level 800. With the potion's effects, the EXP he could acquire from Arumbe had increased by fifty times. That was why it was hard to measure the exact amount.

Minhyuk's notification window, which had grown quiet for a moment, suddenly rang loudly again.

[The system has estimated the total number of EXP you have acquired!]

The fact that the word "estimated" appeared meant that they just assumed the total number.

[After a rough estimate by the system, you can acquire more than eight billion EXP!]

[EXP acquired cannot be measured!]

While the notifications rang repeatedly in his ears, Minhyuk checked the new title he had acquired.

Unique Title

- Your EXP Acquisition Rate will increase by 15%.*

- Your EXP Acquisition Rate will increase by 20% when hunting boss-class monsters.*

- An additional 30% increase in total EXP acquired will be applied to The One who Soared to the Skies once after receiving the title.*

The title was perfect. The 30% increase in total EXP acquired that he would receive once was a very sweet effect for Minhyuk, aiming to reach Level 650 by the end of this.

Minhyuk asked the system, 'So, how much will I level up?'

[The system has given up on measuring the exact EXP acquired and opts to apply the rewards to level-ups!]

[You will receive ten level-ups!]

[You have leveled up!]

[You have leveled up!]

[You have leveled up!]

[You have leveled up!]

[...leveled up!]

[...leveled up!]

[...leveled up!]

[Congratulations! You are the first player to achieve Level 650!]

[...leveled up!]

[...leveled up!]

Minhyuk was left shocked by the notifications that rang constantly in his ears. He leveled up ten times all in one go? It had to be known that once Level 650 had been reached, the amount of EXP

that Minhyuk needed to level up would increase by 1.5x. He would have to work hard for at least half a year to level up ten times to gain the corresponding EXP.

Then, another series of notifications rang.

[You have acquired Mage Arumbe's Heart.]

[You have acquired Arumbe's writings about swordsmanship and magic.]

[You have acquired the Sealed Tempest Ore.]

[You have acquired the 9th Tier Magic Growth Book.]

[You have acquired 8,519 Helenia's Fragment Tokens.]

Simply put, Arumbe was considered the king of Helenia's Fragments. Because of that, Minhyuk could obtain a considerable number of fragment tokens. It was around five to six times more than he could get when hunting the previous fragments. However, he found the things he had acquired quite unusual.

*'I was even able to obtain the Tempest Ore.'*

Minhyuk could see that the Tempest Ore was just like the Sun's Ore and the Mountain Ore, which was why Helenia was so strong. The best part? Minhyuk had the Transcendental's Grinder with him and could turn this ore into a seasoning.

The notifications continued to ring. But Minhyuk decided not to worry about this for now.

Meanwhile, Brod, sitting in a daze after seeing Nerva's bright smile as he disappeared from the rubble, felt anger rise in his chest. His eyes slowly turned red and bloodshot as he shouted, "Nerva! You f\*cking bastaaaaaaaaard!!!"

Did Nerva think Brod would be happy because he sacrificed for his sake? Did he think that he would forgive him for all of the mistakes that he had made in the past? No. That was not the case at all. Brod's fury had reached its peak now. For him, what Nerva did was to escape.

Brod gritted his teeth. He vowed to make the man pay the price for his sins, even if he had to chase him to the depths of hell. However, despite his anger, a single tear dripped down his cheek. Perhaps this was the last tear he would shed for his dear and pure friend, the Nerva of the past.

Minhyuk fully understood Brod's sense of loss. *'It's because he had been holding on for so long with only revenge fueling him.'*

Then, a notification, which arrived a bit later than the rest, rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[Valentino has died.]

Valentino was left inside the fortress, so Minhyuk thought it was only natural. But then, there was something that he found weird.

*'Ali was inside too...?'*

But there were no notifications about Ali being forced to log out. Then, another set of notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[Valentino has signed a contract with Luvien Empire's Emperor Nerva!]

[The contract contains the conditions he offered in exchange for sacrificing his life on behalf of Nerva!]

“...?!” Minhyuk’s eyes grew wide from shock.

The notifications meant that a contract had been signed between Valentino and Nerva inside the fortress.

Then, Nerva’s voice rang from behind everyone. “It would be a waste for you to shed tears for someone like me.”

“...”

Brod slowly turned his head. That was when he saw Nerva, who was exhausted, leaning on Ali as they got warped to this place. Brod immediately stood up and dragged his battered body toward Nerva.

“How dare you!”

“Don’t come near!”

The Swords of the Gods hurriedly shouted as they rushed to Nerva’s side. However, Nerva stopped them with just a word.

“Stay back.”

The moment Brod reached Nerva, he swung his fist and punched him.

Thud—!

Nerva fell on the ground while Brod punched him wildly like a ferocious beast releasing anger.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud—!

Blood dripped down Nerva’s mouth as Brod continued to punch him.

“You f\*cking bastard! You have to pay the price for your sins before you die!”

As the Swords of the Gods watched Brod pummel Nerva, they thought their emperor would be beaten to death if they left them as they were.

“S- Stop!”

“Bastard!”

But the Swords of the Gods could not stop Brod. And because Nerva had ordered them to step back, they could not even make a move and could only stomp their feet in anger.

Thump—

“Enough. That’s an order,” Minhyuk said as he touched Brod’s shoulder. And just like that, Brod stopped punching Nerva. Although his raised fists were shaking from anger, hearing Minhyuk’s voice had brought reason back to him.

Of course, Minhyuk also wanted Nerva dead. But if Brod killed Nerva in front of everyone right here and now, then they would be forced into an all-out war. Even without Nerva, the current Beyond the Heavens Empire could not hold a candle to the Luvien Empire.

And the Swords of the Gods? All of them were left shocked.

*‘How– With just one word, the person that had lost his reason...’*

This just showed how loyal Brod was to Minhyuk.

“Urk. The price that I have to pay for those crimes, I will accept them. Yes, I will wait for your judgment,” Nerva said as blood dripped down his bloody mouth.

The Swords of the Gods rushed to help Nerva when Brod stood up. Minhyuk looked around and thought, *‘Many have died, but we were able to do what we needed to do.’*

Fortunately, they prevented all fragments and shards from reaching Helenia’s embrace. Only the most essential thing remained. Who would inherit the Battle God’s power?

Not long after, another notification rang in Minhyuk’s ears.

Minhyuk’s face twisted when he heard the notification.

*‘The number of shards that we hunted were not counted...’*

When Arumbe was still in Duke Vlad’s shell, he stole the mobs that the Beyond the Heavens Empire had struggled to bring down with the Swords of the Gods.

A sense of helplessness washed over Minhyuk. Shockingly enough, the difference between the number of fragments hunted by the Luvien Empire and the Beyond the Heavens Empire was only five. If Nerva became the true Battle God, then would they be able to defeat his empire?

A notification rang again for Minhyuk, who had won the battle but lost the war.

[You will now be warped to the Battle God’s Descendant’s Succession Ceremony.]

Nerva and Minhyuk were warped at the same time.

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Today would be a historic day. This would be the day when the new Battle God was born to the world.

Just like well-trained knights, the thousands of gods stood at attention. They all wore silver armor carrying the symbol of the Battle God, a sword. Behind them were the millions of troops of the Heavenly Army, who knelt on one knee and waited for the birth of the new Battle God. Standing at the lead was the greatest god, the Battle God.

Two men walked toward the Battle God. The one on the left was Luvien Empire’s Nerva, while the one on the right was Beyond the Heavens Empire’s Minhyuk.

The Battle God looked at the two men. They both looked haggard and were in a mess. This was especially the case for Nerva. He was completely covered in blood to the point that one would not be able to recognize him.

A bitter smile flashed on the Battle God's face as he looked at the two. He thought, *'In the end, Nerva will be my successor...?'*

No matter how he felt, the competition was already over.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—!

Of the two men, the one that was covered with a bright light was none other than Nerva. As the light engulfed his body, his missing left arm slowly regenerated while the blood on his face cleared away. Even his dented and scorched armor returned to its original pristine condition. On the other hand, Minhyuk's appearance remained unchanged. Everyone knew on the spot that the next generation Battle God was Nerva.

Holding a silver crown, the Battle God stepped forward to place it on Nerva's head. At that moment, Nerva turned to look at Minhyuk. He thought, *'Perhaps this was how it was supposed to be?'*

Although there was a bitter smile on his face, it was evident that Nerva felt relieved.

He had betrayed Brod's trust in him and killed his friend's knights just because he wanted to become the Battle God. Because of that, Brod was deprived of the opportunity to become the Battle God, and he succeeded in obtaining the Battle God's Sword position. Now, Brod looked happier serving Emperor Minhyuk than becoming an emperor himself. He even said that Minhyuk was the brightest Sun in the sky.

*'If I ask him now if he wants to return to the past, perhaps he would firmly decline me.'*

If Nerva had not betrayed Brod and he had become the emperor, then he would not have been able to meet Minhyuk. Fate. Although it sounded ridiculous, perhaps this was what fate weaved for them. At this moment, Nerva understood his options.

"Battle God."

"..."

At his call, the Battle God stopped in his tracks.

"From this day forth, I, Nerva Sephiroth, will step down from my position as the emperor."

"...!"

"...!"

Both the Battle God and Minhyuk were shocked by Nerva's declaration. Of course, Nerva had already signed the contract with Valentino. However, he would still make the same decision even if he did not sign that contract. This was the fate that he wanted to weave. Brod and Nerva's story would eventually reach its ending.

"Also... I, Nerva, admit that I have used unscrupulous methods to ascend to my throne. I poisoned Brod's subjects."

Murmur, murmur—

A buzz slowly grew among the gods. Everyone had heard rumors about it. However, it had been confirmed and was now the reality.

The Battle God remained silent as he looked at Nerva. He respected what Nerva wanted to do.

Shwaaaaa—!

With those words, Nerva returned to his appearance from before. His left arm disappeared as the blood that stained his face appeared once again. He looked so fragile that it would not be strange if he collapsed and died on the spot.

On the other hand, a bright light surrounded Minhyuk's body and healed him of all his injuries. Nerva looked at him before turning around without any regrets.

Thump, thump, thump—

Nerva held his left arm as he limped away. Although the gods looked at him in disgust, a slight smile was on his face. It looked like he was delighted with the choice that he had made. He felt like this was the right choice.

Then, he stopped in his tracks. Nerva knew how the foreigners viewed the Luvien Empire and what they said about it. He pondered over their words briefly before turning to look at Minhyuk. Relief was evident on his face as he said, "Athenae's Third Era now belongs to you."

Chapter 965

Nerva turned around once again and limped away after leaving the words, "*Athenae's Third Era now belongs to you.*"

Minhyuk felt his heart thump wildly at those words. And as he watched Nerva's back slowly disappear into the distance, the notifications rang in his ears.

[You have met all the qualifications to become the Battle God!]

[You will now inherit the throne of the Battle God!]

[You can now create a temple where people could worship and praise the Battle God!]

[The 1st Level of the Battle God's power will be released upon inheritance. The 2nd Level will open once you reach Level 700, and the final level will open once you reach Level 800!]

[The Battle God will remain with you for five years to fill in any gaps, flaws, or insufficiencies you might have!]

[The Battle God's 1st Level of power will now be opened!]

[Your CHA has increased by 40%!]

[Your total HP has increased by 5%. Your total MP has risen by 3%!]

[You have acquired the Active Skill: Battle God's Order.]

[The Battle God is the god that leads all of the armies and troops in war and into victory!]

The notifications ended with that.

Minhyuk had already known from Ali and Valentino that the 1st Level of their respective gods' power would open for them the moment they inherited the position of their gods. He had also learned from them that the notifications would tell him about the level he needed to achieve to open the next level. However, despite all of his calculations, he still missed.

*'The other gods only needed to reach Level 660 to open the 2nd level of their power. But my 2nd Level will only open at Level 700 and my final level at Level 800.'*

The walls that he had to face were extremely high. It took almost half a year to reach Level 650 from Level 600. The worst part? It would have been impossible to achieve that without taking the Single Target EXP Increase Potion and the One-week EXP Triple Increase Potion that he bought from the Infinite Shop.

*'Conversely, the Battle God will stand by my side and protect me for five years.'*

From what he knew, most gods would only stay with their successors for a year. This just meant that the position of the Battle God was accompanied by heavy responsibilities and duties. Minhyuk fully understood that point.

*'Once I reach Level 800, I will be able to receive a far more valuable reward.'*

Minhyuk was not too disappointed with the rewards he had received. Unlike the other gods, the Battle God was an Absolute God. And that was not all; he was even hailed as the strongest and greatest Absolute God. Because of that, he was curious. He hurriedly checked the new skill that he had received.

#### Active Skill

- You can disable all buff effects and abnormal statuses on your target.*
- Can be used on NPCs, players, monsters, etc., with levels higher than yours. It will depend on the amount of CHA you possess.*

The Battle God's Order was quite an unusual yet unique skill.

*'I can use this to decide if someone would be at an advantage or a disadvantage.'*

If Minhyuk cast the Battle God's Order, he could also remove any abnormal status afflicting his target. On the other hand, he could also remove any buff effects that they have applied on themselves. If he could use this properly on his enemies and allies, he could exert tremendous power.

Next, he checked the authority that he received. Minhyuk had some expectation of this authority since he already had the Origin Authority: God and Knight in his possession.

#### Growth Authority

##### **Effects**

:

- You can speed up your designated target's EXP Acquisition Rate and Growth Rate by 1.5~10x faster.
  - You can bestow the power of growth to those who grow slowly, have reached their limits, or to those who could not grow because of various factors.
  - Whenever your designated target reaches 100% Growth Level, the speed of their growth will double.
  - Whenever your designated target crosses over a wall, this will help you present various things that will give them more power and aid their growth.
  - Current Allowed Number of Targets: 1
  - The things that you will give to aid in your target's growth might sometimes be changed by the system.
  - Sealed.
  - Sealed.
  - Sealed.
  - To unseal the other effects, your target must achieve 100% growth level three times first.
  - If your designated target fails to reach 100% growth level three times, you can terminate the authority one year after the date of designation.
- ‘It’s a skill that can help someone else grow.’

From what he could see, it was a skill that could be applied to players and NPCs. Based on the description, he could increase their speed of growth by up to ten times.

‘Isn’t this skill nuts?’

Players would already jump in joy if they could get an EXP buff potion that could increase their EXP Acquisition Rate by 10%. But this skill could allow anyone to increase their speed of growth from 1.5~10 times. And that was not all; it was also possible for Minhyuk to nurture several more people once he released the seal by helping someone grow well.

‘What’s certain here is that whoever I designate as my target would feel like they had won the lottery.’

After checking all the skills, Minhyuk turned to look at the approaching Battle God. At the same time, another notification rang in his ears.

[AI will now control your character.]

Then, the world message rang.

[You can now bear witness to the birth of the new Battle God!]

The people quickly clicked on the notifications one after another.

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Many of the viewers felt their hearts thump wildly. The Battle God was the greatest and strongest Battle God. So, who would inherit his position? And when Minhyuk's figure as he stood in front of the Battle God appeared in front of everyone, the crowd cheered.

Minhyuk, who the AI controlled, flinched when the Battle God gently placed the silver crown on his head.

"Are you afraid?"

The AI-controlled Minhyuk nodded in answer to the Battle God's question. Then, a magnificent and imposing voice resounded all over the place.

[Battle God. It is a position with heavy duties and responsibilities. The Battle God is the one that will stand at the vanguard and lead all of the gods in war.]

[For a human, climbing to such a position might feel too much and scary.]

"Do you feel like running away?"

Minhyuk could not answer the Battle God's question and remained standing there.

"Then, the Battle God said, "I have watched you from the beginning to the present. At first, you..."

[You wanted to live.]

[As a human, you wanted to achieve a dream that no one in the world has ever accomplished.]

[You laughed and enjoyed all the delicious delicacies in the world and continued to live on.]

"And..."

[You worked harder than anybody else. Just like a farmer who plows his field, sows his seed, and cares for them until they bore fruit, you have been working hard and giving it your all.]

[All of the effort and hard work that you have done are things that not even the greatest god, the Battle God, could not dare to imagine doing.]

"I have been watching you the whole time."

[Even if you weren't born with the blood of the gods, even if you're not special, all the effort and hard work you invested will definitely pay off.]

"I had always hoped that you would be the one to succeed and inherit my throne."

[Your hard work, will to never back down, firm determination, and consideration of others. You...]

"I acknowledge and respect that."

[I am fully aware.]

"How hard it must have been for you, hmm?"

At that moment, Minhyuk raised his hand and wiped away a tear on his cheek with a bitter smile.

The Battle God comforted him. “How difficult it was, no?”

[Everyone was aware. That’s why the Battle God said, “Only you.”]

“You will be the only candidate that will inherit the throne of the Battle God.”

[Only you.]

“You will be the emperor that will lead Athenae.”

[You are the only one.]

“From the lowest position.”

[You will become the god standing at the highest position.]

“Then, are you still afraid?”

It would be a lie for Minhyuk to say he was no longer afraid just because the Battle God said a few words to him.

[The you now...]

[...have hundreds of gods and millions of Heavenly Army troops just like the Battle God.]

[But even though you have become the Battle God, in the end, you can only lead them if you win their hearts.]

“Is it even necessary?”

The Battle God asked as he looked around. Minhyuk looked at the countless gods standing around him.

“Do you need to win their hearts?”

[For hundreds, thousands of years, the Battle God had always worked hard to try and win the hearts of the gods and the Heavenly Army troops.]

[However, that does not mean that you also need to win the hearts of everyone present here.]

“Don’t you already have it?”

[Your very own Heavenly Army. Your very own Land of the Gods.]

Then, at that moment, shocking notifications rang worldwide, one after another.

[Sword Emperor Ellie declares that she will sometimes join and be a part of your Heavenly Army!]

[Mercenary King Venteio declares that he will sometimes join and be a part of your Heavenly Army!]

[Overlord Raldo declares that he will sometimes join and be a part of your Heavenly Army!]

[Great Demon Gremory declares that she will sometimes join and be a part of your Heavenly Army!]

[Dragon King declares...sometimes...!]

[Elven King Argon declares...sometimes...!]

Hundreds and thousands of notifications rang all over the world.

“All of your hard work and consideration...”

[...have helped you create your very own Heavenly Army.]

“Your kindness, mercy, and love...”

[...have helped you create your Land of the Gods.]

At that moment, the Battle God’s body turned into light and disappeared before Minhyuk. Minhyuk hurriedly followed the light and saw the Battle God appear before the gods and the Heavenly Army.

On the other hand, Minhyuk was left alone. There was no one standing behind him.

“The one step that you took...”

[I have sent the most remarkable man to wield a spear.]

Spear God Ben appeared right behind Minhyuk. He stabbed his spear on the ground and looked at the gods and the Heavenly Army troops with an arrogant and noble look in his eyes. He looked at them as if he was looking at his enemies.

“With another step that you took...”

[I have sent the candidate to become the greatest emperor in the continent.]

Brod appeared right next to Minhyuk.

“With another step and another...”

[You have embraced many. And now, they have become your very own Heavenly Army and will be the ones that you will lead in your very own Land of the Gods.]

Unlike the gods and heavenly army troops standing behind the Battle God, the ones appearing behind Minhyuk were wearing white armor and carrying the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together on their backs.

Many others appeared behind him. Not only were Elpis, Gorfido, Mandala, Bichor, Beanie, Luna, Luo, Elizabeth, and Don appeared, but even Genie, Locke, Khan, Abel, Lucia, Alicia, Ascar, Ruth, Mei Wei, Carr, Ali, and the rest of his guild members also stood behind him. Minhyuk felt overwhelmed as he turned to look at them. Then, a white space opened behind them and revealed the millions of troops of the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

From their position, it seemed that they were about to confront the current Battle God and his army.

Minhyuk felt his heart thump wildly again as he watched the Battle God move and said, “We have been protecting this place for a very long time.”

[That’s just how old and rusty we all are. Every single god and member of the Heavenly Army knows this.]

“Now, the world...”

[The world needs someone new.]

The Battle God asked Minhyuk once again. “Are you still afraid?”

And Minhyuk answered, “Yes. I’m afraid.”

[But there’s a slight smile on his face.]

[Like the Battle God had said, he could climb to this position because of his efforts, hard work, will, consideration, kindness, mercy, love, and firm determination.]

[Even though the seasons would change...]

[He would not change and would continue to work hard.]

[Just like he always did, he would continue plowing his fields and seeds. He would continue to care for them until they bloom and finally bear fruit.]

[That’s why it would be fine.]

“Just continue to take one step forward. Take one step after another just like you did before.”

The words that the Battle God uttered earlier once again rang.

[Only you.]

“You will be the only candidate that will inherit the throne of the Battle God.”

[You are the only one.]

“From the lowest position.”

[You will become the god standing at the highest position.]

The Battle God walked toward Minhyuk and gently placed the silver crown on his head as he finished his words.

[Because you’re the only one.]

“That’s why you can do it.”

[You are none other than the Great Sovereign that will lead all of the gods.]

“You are the Battle God.”

With that, the world message resonated all over the world.

[The new Battle God has been born to the world!]

[The name of the new Battle God is “Minhyuk”!]

The entire world cheered.

Chapter 966

The entire world was in an uproar.

Articles were being written and published non-stop all over the world. That was not all; news and other media outlets had been sharing stories about Minhyuk and the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

[Beyond the Heavens Empire: The ones who did not give up when everyone else had given up.]

[All of Helenia's Fragments have been completely swept away and cleared. The chances of players successfully being able to hunt Helenia in the months to come have significantly increased.]

[Changes in Athenae: The Sun has fallen and given way to a new Sun's birth.]

[Is the Second Era over? Will this be the start of the Third Era?]

[Minhyuk had received overwhelming votes for "The Player I Want to Become the Most" with 73% of the total votes.]

[Minhyuk became the Battle God. Ilhwa Group's stock prices had reached an all-time high by the end of the trading session.]

[Minhyuk's level increased by ten?! What in the world happened?]

[Beyond the Heavens Empire saved Athenae. Love calls from various advertising companies are being sent to their players. Their worth? It has increased by 1.5x.]

[God of Shields Valentino: Dominating the number one entry in all portal sites.]

They not only dominated the articles and media reports, but they were also the main topic of discussion in all of the community sites worldwide.

[He's Our Lord, the Food God. I can't believe a player has climbed to the position of the Battle God, an Absolute God.]

[Hehe. Agreed. But what's more surprising is that the Battle God is only Minhyuk's sub-class.]

[Wasn't the Battle God Minhyuk's original class?]

[Nope, nope. It's Food God.]

[Woah. His sub-class is Battle God. Pfft. Shit, that's crazy sick~]

[Hey guys, did you notice? In this inheritance video, Minhyuk's vassals did not kneel despite facing the Battle God and the other gods. It's so cool~]

[Ah. That's right! The Spear God, Sword of the Gods Luo, Brod, Elpis~ Kghhk. Even the gods will have a hard time dealing with them.]

[The Beyond the Heavens Empire has a lot of different NPCs. And they all have their personalities and attitudes. They're overwhelming with coolness!]

[To be honest... I want to see how the NPCs live their daily lives. Agree?]

[Agreed!]

[Then, move to the Beyond the Heavens Empire. Or join the Minhyuk Religion.]

[But I'm so attached to the kingdom where I belong now... \*sigh\*...]

[Me too. 'Sides, an empire is too big and complicated for me. I should remain active in a small kingdom and grow quietly.]

Many players were curious about the Beyond the Heavens Empire. It was only natural. After all, the ones who actively hunted Helenia's Fragments while they were all in despair were the Beyond the Heavens Empire. And it was even the empire ruled by the new Battle God.

After the succession and inheritance ceremony ended, Minhyuk checked all of the articles and comments published about him and the Beyond the Heavens Empire before again accessing Athenae.

Once connected, Minhyuk looked up and said, “Do me a favor, Obren.”

[You always bother me. So annoying, for real.]

Minhyuk had obtained the Growth Authority. He needed to find someone who could meet the conditions of *The Ever-growing One*. And Obren, the guardian deity of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, had a keener eye than Minhyuk regarding things like that. That was why he was asking him a favor.

[Even though you became the Battle God, nothing much has changed. Haa... I can't believe you're using me just to try and find a single person.]

A faint smile appeared on Minhyuk's face when he heard that. Then, he said, “Fortunately, you're by my side, Obren.”

[Ahem, ahem. Although I'm very reluctant, I'll try and look for one. But! Only if I have the time.]

Minhyuk chuckled deep inside when he heard Tsun-Bren's answer. This was a testament to the fact that he had reached the maximum level of training when it came to Obren.

At that moment, a notification rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[The Luvien Empire has proposed a six-month ceasefire. Once approved, the Luvien Empire and the Beyond the Heavens Empire will enter a truce for six months.]

Minhyuk did not hesitate to answer, ‘Yes.’

[The Luvien Empire and the Beyond the Heavens Empire have entered a truce for six months.]

Haze entered the office with a brief knock and began reporting, “Your Majesty, the Luvien Empire has sent fifty million platinum. We already have the list of the selected players among those who have lost their valuable artifacts.”

Some of them could not laugh even though they had won. Most of the 300 players who had participated in the battle had lost their precious artifacts and EXP. They had selected the ones who had suffered the greatest loss in terms of artifacts and would send them to the Luvien Empire's Treasure House.

Then, Haze said, “We only have six months. During this time, the Luvien Empire will try to find a new emperor and quickly regain their stability. We have to use this time to grow as quickly as possible.”

Fifty million platinum was a considerable amount of money. There were even some empires that could not dream of managing a vast sum. They could only use the money left over from buying and managing their hundreds of territories. However, this money was still insufficient for the Beyond the Heavens Empire to catch up with the Luvien Empire.

“We have to secure more funds. We also have to strengthen the Minhyuk Religion.”

“I know, Haze.” Minhyuk nodded.

Haze, who was about to leave, said, "Sir Valentino's evaluation has improved greatly."

Minhyuk had also watched the video. Valentino, who hurriedly connected with the broadcasting station, sacrificed himself to save Athenae. During the process, Valentino's level dropped, and he lost many of the artifacts he cherished. It was evident in the video that Valentino had sacrificed himself for the sake of the Beyond the Heavens Empire and Athenae. And from what it looked like, Haze was also aware of it.

"Because of that, I think it would be better for the Beyond the Heavens Empire to relax some of the restrictions we have placed upon Sir Valentino and give him a small portion of the profits that he would gain from here on out."

Minhyuk found it completely unexpected that Stingy Haze was the first one to propose giving Valentino money. Well, Valentino of today was the type of person who deserved this much.

"We'll give back 4% of his profits."

"...?"

But just as expected, Haze was extremely stingy.

With an awkward smile, Minhyuk said, "Let's keep it clean and make it 5%."

Haze, sporting a solemn look, pondered the matter for a long time before nodding and agreeing. "I understand."

With that, she left.

At this moment, Minhyuk was about to check the Food God's quest that he received when he reached Level 650. But before he could do so, someone knocked on his door again. This time, it was Godly Editor Carron.

"I'm sorry for barging in; I was in a hurry."

"What's the matter?"

"How about doing a broadcast showing off the NPCs of the Beyond the Heavens Empire?"

"Do a broadcast that shows off the NPCs of the Beyond the Heavens Empire?"

"Yes. After Your Majesty has successfully inherited the position of the Battle God, many have grown curious about the daily lives of the NPCs of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. Isn't it good to strike while the iron is hot? I think this will generate quite a lot of revenue for us."

"But I'm busy..."

Minhyuk wondered if such a brief live broadcast would truly give him huge profits. To be honest, he was very busy.

"I have to go and eat something delicious. I also have to check the Food God's quest."

“But you’re not in any hurry, no?”

Minhyuk was actually in a hurry to eat something delicious. But Carron had always performed beyond his expectations and given them outstanding results. Besides, he had not been telling him to do a broadcast for a long time. He just wanted him to do it today.

“Do I only need to focus on the lives of the NPCs? Will I even have viewers? Aren’t the profits for broadcasts dependent on the number of views?”

Then, Carron said, “The money would roll in via a sponsorship system. The number of views wouldn’t matter.”

“Carron. How much do you think we can gather from sponsor donations?”

“More than half a billion.”

“...?!”

Minhyuk was beyond shocked. Could a broadcast done in just a single day truly earn more than 500 million in profits?

“Right now, there are a lot of people in the world that are grateful to the Beyond the Heavens Empire. I’m very sure that we will be able to reach this estimate.”

The Beyond the Heavens Empire was in dire need of funds.

*‘Well, even if I do those things tomorrow, it would still not be too late.’*

And just as Carron said, this was when the Beyond the Heavens Empire was in the spotlight. They had to strike while the iron was hot.

So, Minhyuk went out with Carron to continue their conversation.

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The entire world was still buzzing. The players who loved Athenae dearly were extremely grateful to the Beyond the Heavens Empire and clamoring to show their gratitude.

[I’m thankful. Thank you for protecting my only comfort zone after work. ??]

[Agreed... I’m still currently in the process of finding a job. Every day has been exhausting, but playing Athenae for an hour every day has given me joy.]

[Even our country’s politicians and businessmen all enjoy playing Athenae after work. Ho.]

[Thank you, Beyond the Heavens Empire! Thank you, Minhyuk!]

People had been heaping praises on Beyond the Heavens Empire on various community sites worldwide. Even Ilhwa Group’s stocks had soared by 30% today. Then...

[Hey, hey! I think Minhyuk is doing a live on ZTube?]

[Don’t f\*ck with me.]

[Minhyuk’s probably eating, no?]

[Yep, yep. Minhyuk’s most definitely having a meal. Right?]

[How do you guys know that?]

[The Food God would eat eight out of the fourteen hours he was logged inside the game...]

[...?]

[What about the remaining six hours?]

[He drank for six hours. Hehe.]

[???

A spark was lit in the community sites. Most of them were talking about how ridiculous Minhyuk was regarding eating.

[Hey. Is this for real...?]

[Go and check ZTube.]

[Minhyuk's live is called 'Emperor's Vlog.']

[For real?!]

[Hey! Shit. Wait, let me go and sponsor him!]

[Hiyaa! It's on a sponsorship system.]

The people began to flock to Ztube, clicking on the live video named "Emperor's Daily Life Vlog" as quickly as they came. Then, the scene on the live unfolded in front of them.

"Good meal!"

[What does he mean by "good meal"?]

[I think it means "Good morning, let's have a meal"???

[Yep, yep. You got that right. It's so awkward but... so cute...]

The comments exploded the moment Minhyuk appeared on their screens. Minhyuk said, "Today, I'm going to show you how the people of my empire go about their daily lives. To be honest, I don't think it's anything special. It's just everyone's normal daily routine. I don't know if many of you will like seeing it."

[Kghhk! I've been waiting for this! Beyond the Heavens Empire's daily life, let's go!]

[We have been waiting for a Beyond the Heavens' vlog for a very long time ??]

The broadcast had just started, and many people had already begun donating through the sponsorship system.

Although the viewers could not tell if the amount was already huge, everyone could see a constant stream of donations. These donations came from young students, college students, office workers, professionals, and others who were grateful to the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

To top it off, the vlogger's face was extremely handsome. So, even those who did not know about Athenae started to join the live broadcast.

Minhyuk planned to just walk through the Beyond the Heavens Empire and capture anything and everything that he could see in the empire. As he walked, the first NPC finally appeared on the screens of all curious viewers. The first NPC was in the middle of the street and spread out on a sunbed with a tray table carrying a glass of mojito right next to it. This was none other than Beanie.

Beanie had a pair of sunglasses perched on his snout, was lying down on the sunbed, and was working on his tan. When he saw Minhyuk, he raised one of his paws arrogantly in greeting. Then, he stopped paying attention to him and turned to the mojito beside him. He grabbed the straw and drank everything in one go.

[No. Lolololol. He's so freaking chic. Lmao.]

[Did you see that? He just raised one paw in greeting, then ignored Minhyuk again. Lololol.]

[What's even funnier is that the people around him look used to it and don't even care. Hahahahaha.]

[So cute... A pig is getting a tan...]

[A black pig...?]

[Lmao. What's with the sudden black pig joke?]

[If a pig gets tanned, then it becomes a black pig... True...]

Donation notifications continued to ring. On everyone's screens, they saw Minhyuk walk past Beanie to find the next person.

\*\*\*

One of the richest men in the world, Jeep, owned a company called *Blue*. He used to run a small site where he sold books and finally created his own success story after he dipped his toes into various businesses.

Jeep's estimated assets were worth around 200 trillion won, making him one of the top ten wealthiest men in the world. Although he became one of the world's wealthiest at such a young age, there was something that he could not achieve no matter what he tried.

As he sat in his private jet, Jeep looked at the articles about him on various social networking sites.

[Jeep's Assets: 100 points.]

[Jeep's Abilities: 100 points.]

[Jeep's Hair: 0 points.]

“...”

That was right. Jeep might have everything he ever wanted, but he just could not eliminate the curse of baldness. Of course, he had learned not to pay too much attention to it now. But in that small corner at the back of his mind, there was still this lingering heaviness and sadness.

Then, at that moment...

“It seems like Mr. Minhyuk is doing a live vlog.”

“A vlog?”

Jeep was a young entrepreneur, not like those old-fashioned chairmen. As a young chairman of the new generation, he also went and played Athenae to relieve his stress. He was Minhyuk's fan and was very grateful to him for what he and his people had done for Athenae.

Hearing that Minhyuk was doing a live, Jeep hurriedly pulled out his tablet and clicked on the vlog. Jeep chuckled when he saw the baby piggy lying on the sunbed and working on a tan.

Then, he heard Minhyuk speak.

[It seems like they're in the middle of a sacred ceremony now. We have to be quiet. Got it?]

Jeep tilted his head in confusion when Minhyuk started to whisper. Then, he turned the camera and showed the scene before him.

He saw a kneeling man crying loudly as a man stood in front of him and gently held his head. Jeep jumped from his seat when he saw this. Why? Because the crying man on his knees was bald.

Although Jeep played Athenae and was a fan of Minhyuk, he was not clear about the intricate details of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. After all, he was too busy to pay attention to everything and anything.

The man, who looked like a paladin, asked on his screen.

[Was it hard?!]

“It's hard.”

Jeep started to lose his hair in his early twenties. He might have everything, but he could empathize with the person.

‘*You have no hair, huh?*’ He had heard these words so many times that he felt like he would have calluses in his ears.

Then, the kneeling man shouted, despair tinting his voice.

[It was hard!]

[Have faith!!!]

[I have faith!]

[Do you want them to flutter with the wind?!]

[Y– Yeaaaaaaaah!!!]

[Then, follow me. Grow hair! Grow! Grow!]

[Grow hair! Grow! Grow!]

[Louder!]

[GROW HAIR! GROW! GROW!]

Sweat pooled in Jeep's hands. His throat had gone dry, and he could feel the tension in his body. Then, he saw a bright light shine from Corr's hands as black hair grew from the kneeling man's once shiny head.

*'U- Uwoooooooooooooh!'*

The kneeling man shed tears of joy. And Jeep? A tear trickled down his chin as he watched the scene. Jeep empathized with the man's hardships, adversities, and pain.

People played games, read fantasy novels, and watched ZTube so they could live vicariously through others and feel the same satisfaction they felt. And right now, Jeep was laughing in delight and satisfaction when he saw the man obtain something he could not even get in this world.

With tears dripping down the delighted smile on his face, Jeep donated to the live.

## Chapter 967

By accident, Minhyuk encountered Corr on the street. So, he decided to turn his camera and film the scene before him. It wasn't intentional at all. Since this was the "Emperor's Daily Life Vlog," he just walked down the street like usual and filmed Corr when he encountered him.

But something shocking happened when black hair grew from the shiny head of the man that Corr put his hand on.

Shockingly enough, the notification window almost froze from the constant wave of donation notifications from the sponsorship system.

When Minhyuk thought about it, he recalled that the ordinary(?) Corr had been creating huge waves all over the world. He was even hailed as the *Hope* of men.

Of course, the live chat room was going crazy too.

[Th– They have appeared...!]

[The baldies from all over the world are gathering!]

[Guys, this is frfr. When I saw hair grow out of that man's shiny head, I jumped up from my seat and cheered. All hail... God Talmor...!]

[Sob... I couldn't even stop my tears!]

[Hooray for the baldies!]

[Talmor Fati!]

[Dididi~! Dididi~ Didi!]

[Baldies! Let's all show them our power!]

The rest of the viewers were in awe of their solidarity. Instantly, they changed their nicknames and plastered their bald heads on their display pictures. Then, at that moment, something happened that made the entire live chat room freeze for about two seconds.

“...?”

Even Minhyuk froze on the spot. Minhyuk even blinked a few times to confirm. He thought that his eyes were playing tricks on him just now.

Five billion. That was the amount of the donation that suddenly flashed on his screen. Even the donor's nickname was quite unusual.

*‘BaldEagle?’*

Then, the live chat room went nuts.

[Someone just sent five billion as a donation...?]

[OMG. Who is it?!]

[Suddenly, a hidden tycoon appeared...]

Minhyuk could not hide how flustered he was. After all, it was not a small amount of money.

“Mr. BaldEagle. Thank you for your donations. But... I think it's too much. Did you send it by mistake?”

But with his words, a short and straightforward comment appeared in the live chat room. It was the picture of a leader bald eagle glaring sternly at his bald eagle team members.

[Lol. Hahahahahaha.]

[Ah. That picture is so funny. Lololol.]

[The king of bald eagles. Lmao.]

[It looks like he's declaring that he's the king of all the bald eagles. Hmm?]

Minhyuk might not know it, but ‘BaldEagle’ Jeep's assets were around 200 trillion won. For him, spending five billion as a donation was nothing more than throwing pennies around. It was similar to how someone with a fortune of a hundred million won would spend thousands on water. Yes, Jeep was an extremely wealthy tycoon. But even though he had those assets, he was very stingy.

[Follow the BaldEagle!!!]

has donated 30,000 won...]

Another wave of donation notifications began to ring. Minhyuk was suddenly bombarded with more donations than he initially expected and was overwhelmed. Thankfully, a few comments had relieved him of some of the burden.

[They're only a few tens of thousands of won for me. Besides, we have all seen how much the Beyond the Heavens Empire has sacrificed and lost for Athenae. Maybe your losses have reached billions of won, no?]

[Donating to the Beyond the Heavens Empire is not a waste of money. After all, you protected Athenae.]

[Beyond the Heavens Empire and Emperor Minhyuk has protected our alternative world for us.]

A small smile curled up on Minhyuk's face. Today, he realized how meaningful this kind of vlog was. It was a valuable experience for him; the player hailed as the Supreme and the idol of many players in this game, especially since he was able to communicate with those who cared, respected, and loved him.

Minhyuk continued to film his and the others' daily lives as he walked around the empire. Then, he saw Ben, who was resting against a gigantic elephant.

Ben turned to him and said, "Your Majesty, this elephant can excrete around fifty kilograms of dung daily."

[No. Lololol.]

[Why did elephants suddenly appear here?]

[The poop that an elephant makes in a day is much heavier than me...]

"With the dung this guy excretes alone, I can make around a thousand cups of elephant dung coffee daily."

Unlike the viewers, who thought it was a joke, Ben was very serious. With his head bowed respectfully, he reported, "This servant of yours... can probably make enough coffee to fill Your Majesty's bottomless stomach."

"...Good job, Grandpa. You did a great job!"

"Your Majesty..."

"Grandpa...!" Minhyuk shouted, a small smile on his face. He looked at Ben as if he was really, *really* precious.

[Why did the vlog suddenly turn into BL after they talked about elephant poop? Lmao.]

[No, what hahahahahahaha. They both look so serious. Lolol.]

[Hyaah~ I really like Grandpa Ben ??]

[He looked so happy when he saw Emperor Minhyuk's excitement upon hearing that he could drink elephant dung coffee.]

Another wave of donation notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears.

This time, Minhyuk met Luna and Elizabeth, two of the youngest members of the Beyond the Heavens Empire, as he continued to walk on the street. The two kids had grown up a lot. Luna could polymorph now. Her polymorphed form was a girl who was overloaded with cuteness and beauty on par with Elizabeth.

"Kyaaa! Grrrr!" Elizabeth, who saw Minhyuk, immediately acted cutely. The act immediately made the donation notification window to bring in another wave.

Minhyuk continued to walk and film the daily lives of the NPCs of his empire in his vlog. And the viewers? They began to realize how unique a nation the Beyond the Heavens Empire indeed was and how the place was filled with energy and happiness.

Minhyuk had only done the live for the first time, but many people had started to think about moving to Beyond the Heavens Empire after watching glimpses of their lives in this broadcast.

And since the vlog was literally an "A Day in the Life" type of vlog, it could not only show them the fun and interesting things.

Brod, carrying his luggage on his back, approached Minhyuk and knelt on one knee. Minhyuk looked down at him with cold eyes.

[Why did the atmosphere suddenly change...?]

[Minhyuk had ordered Brod to work with Valentino and pioneer the Aveid Territory for a year. He has been demoted.]

[But Brod did a great job this time. Shouldn't they give him an award?]

[Besides, aren't the two of them close? Brod is a completely loyal vassal who is willing to sacrifice his life for Minhyuk. And Minhyuk cares deeply about him. So, why?]

The viewers voiced their doubts as the atmosphere of the daily life vlog suddenly changed.

Then, Brod said, "Your Majesty. I promise to do a wonderful job pioneering the Aveid Territory for one year and make it more beautiful than any other territory."

But Minhyuk's gaze remained cold as he looked at Brod. "Brod. Do you hate me now? Are you disappointed in me?"

Brod shook his head. "I have sinned by defying Your Majesty's orders. To be honest, I think the price I must pay for such a sin is too light."

"I understand how loyal you are to me. But if you died there, then the sense of loss that would weigh down on me would be unimaginable."

Brod immediately pressed his forehead to the ground when he heard those words. "Forgive me, Your Majesty."

“I want you to reflect on what you mean to me and think about what is best for you and me during that year.” After leaving those words, Minhyuk turned around.

“Your Majesty! Please stay healthy!” Brod followed Minhyuk’s figure before knocking his head on the ground again. After watching Minhyuk slowly walk away, Brod stood up and hoisted his old bag before walking away, his figure forlorn.

Minhyuk stopped and hurriedly turned to look at Brod’s departing figure. He stretched his hand out and lowered it just as quickly.

“Take care and come back safely,” Minhyuk whispered, a complicated expression flashing.

The viewers, who watched the entire situation unfold, finally realized what happened.

[At the end of it all, Minhyuk is the emperor ruling his empire. Before he went to war, he gave an order to all of the NPCs. “Do not come to the fortress.” This was because, for players, death was nothing but a forced logout. But for NPCs, death is a true and complete death.]

[Even if their NPCs were strong, it was still dangerous. It was an episode related to Helenia, with countless anomalies and variables they did not know of.]

[But Brod went against Minhyuk’s orders and came to the fortress to save him.]

[Minhyuk probably understands what Brod was feeling more than anybody else. But Brod broke the imperial decree. As the emperor, he must treat Brod coldly to emphasize that he might have lost him back there.]

[Although everything worked out well in the end, the emperor still has to do what an emperor should do.]

[When Minhyuk stretched his hand out toward Brod’s departing back and bit his lips, he looked like he was saying, “Thank you, and I’m sorry.”]

[Minhyuk is still young. But he’s carrying a huge and heavy burden.]

[But the two are very close to each other. Things will work out between them.]

[Cheer up, Minhyuk!]

[Cheer up!]

[

The suffocating feeling in Minhyuk’s chest lessened slightly with the viewers’ comforting words and gestures.

*‘Is this what it feels like to receive the care and comfort of others?’*

Their comforting words and gestures were much more significant and warmer than he thought. At that moment, Minhyuk thought that perhaps it was alright for him, even if he was the Supreme, to share some of the burden he carried with the people who looked up to him and supported him sometimes.

Minhyuk chuckled lightly before moving again, only stopping when he met another NPC. When he saw the NPC, he thought, ‘Wow... *There’s going to be a donation rush...*’

This was because the NPC was none other than the world’s best-selling author, Aruvel. The moment the viewers saw him, the live chat room was immediately flooded with their comments.

[Erotichey!]

[Erotichey!]

[Erotichey!]

[Erotichey!]

The “Erotichey!” the viewers used to greet Aruvel was short for “Erotica Author, Hey!”

BaldEagle, who donated five billion won in one go, posted a question in the live chat room.

[Who’s Aruvel?]

[Aruvel is the world’s best-selling author, not only in Athenae but also in reality. His first-ever work, "Why Did the Prince Go Out Tonight?" has already reached 28 billion unofficial views.]

[He’s the best erotica author of this era. His writings are remarkable. His main job is as an author, and his side job is as a sage.]

[All hail, God-vel!]

BaldEagle, whose interest was piqued, replied.

[I’ll come back after reading it.]

Then, he disappeared. Meanwhile, Minhyuk continued to observe Aruvel. Aruvel was sitting on a chair and scribbling in his notebook, which was firmly placed on his desk and conveniently spread out on the street. Suddenly, Aruvel’s eyes grew wide. He shouted, “Ah– Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah– It’s coming! The inspiration! This inspiration is coming!”

With a delighted and satisfied look on his face, he began to write furiously in his notebook. Minhyuk immediately focused the camera on him to capture the impact of the birth of his new work.

“The lady named Arumi, an orphan, discovered an injured puppy in the forest. She gently treated the puppy and even began to raise it. One day, the puppy led Arumi somewhere.

“And in the place where the puppy led him was a man dressed in shabby clothes collapsed on the ground! Arumi hurriedly helped the man and brought him to her home to treat his injuries.

“And the man? It was none other than the empire’s first prince! Aaah! The puppy that returned the favor that it received! The creaking bed! And the rough and harsh groans of the two people!”

[Wooaaaaah! Squeak, squeak!]

[This insane drama is the best!]

[WOW!]

The viewers cheered as their expectations for Aruvel’s new work reached an all-time high! At the same time, another tremendous wave of donations poured in. After around twenty minutes, a notification suddenly went off.

[Hahahahaha. Wait. Lol. He said that he would read it before coming back... He must have read it carefully.]

[Wow. Shit. Ten billion won worth of donation? For real? Lololol.]

Then, BaldEagle said...

[All hail... God Aruvel...]

\*\*\*

Locke had a ZTube channel under *Captain NGSB[1] Locke*. He created this channel to prove that being ugly was not a sin and that they could also be confident in their skin. He often filmed his day-to-day life as a forever single person. The channel was so popular that it already reached 1.5 million subscribers.

*‘Minhyuk is doing a ZTube live. Should I go and teach him the ropes?’*

Ztube’s great senior, Locke, had decided to teach Minhyuk several things about Ztube. Locke knew that he was behind Minhyuk in most things. However, he believed that he was better when it came to live broadcasts. After all, his daily income from live broadcasts alone was well over ten million.

Finally, Locke met Minhyuk in front of the castle.

Minhyuk had already ended the live in front of the castle. He groaned softly as he swiped through the hologram before him.

“Minhyuk.”

“Oh, Locke! You came at the right time!”

Locke smiled happily, knowing that Minhyuk needed him. He already had a rough idea of how things would unfold. He said, “I heard you went live on ZTube today. How’s the number of views? How about your earnings?”

Of course, many people must have seen the live and the profits he earned would be incredibly high. After all, he’s the most controversial person at the moment. However, Locke still had great pride in himself. He was very proud that he could teach Minhyuk something as a senior ZTuber! Besides, Minhyuk was not necessarily better than himself.

Minhyuk said, "I'm happy many people came to see me."

"Really? So, what are you looking for?"

"The details of the donations."

Since ZTube had a contract with Joy Co. Ltd., one could check their daily view count and the amount of sponsor donations that they had received while still connected inside the game Athenae.

"Okay, let me teach you," Locke said. He thought that since this was Minhyuk's first broadcast, there would be at least 200 million won in donations.

*'It's only natural since this is Minhyuk.'*

Locke taught Minhyuk carefully and introduced him to all of the details.

"Oh! It's done," Minhyuk shouted. He was left in shock and amazement when he saw the details of the donations.

"Wow. I'm grateful to the viewers."

"Did you earn a lot?"

"Yep. A lot."

Locke thought about Minhyuk and his expectations. Minhyuk was both the successor to a large corporation and the emperor of the Beyond the Heavens Empire. The fact that he would say that it was a lot meant that it was much higher than what Locke expected. Maybe it was not 200 million, but 500 million won?

So, Locke asked, "Can you share it with me?"

"Okies."

[You want to share your ZTube Donation Information with Locke. Confirm?]

Minhyuk quickly confirmed. Then, the daily earnings were posted in front of Locke.

"...?"

"???"

"...?"

"???"

Locke was rendered speechless.

## Chapter 968

With just one live broadcast on ZTube, Minhyuk earned around 26 billion won. This was a ridiculously large donation that easily broke through the previous highest one-day donation record.

Minhyuk, who reconnected the next day in Athenae, went to the forest near the Beyond the Heavens Empire and thought, *‘BaldEagle played a huge part in the amount of donations.’*

Minhyuk did not know who BaldEagle was, but when he ended his live, the man said that he would come back and watch if he went on live again. The donation that BaldEagle had sent alone exceeded ten billion won. As for the others, the accumulation of their donations also exceeded ten billion won.

*‘It’s just like Carron said. It’s because my worth has reached an all-time high during this period.’*

Minhyuk was the one who saved Athenae. And nearly half of the world's population has an Athenae ID. Even the world’s leading political figures were playing this game. It was only natural that, as the hottest figure, he could earn that much. Of course, he intended to use the donation amount of more than twenty billion won that he had received as funds for the development of their empire.

And now, onto the most crucial part. The corners of his lips could not stop twitching when he took out a blue-colored ore. It was none other than the Tempest Ore, one of Helenia’s Ores. There were four of Helenia’s Ores in total, and each one could significantly enhance the power of her attributed magic.

The Sun’s Ore and the Mountain Ore were both ores that Minhyuk had already obtained. One was already in the form of salt, while the other was turned into *doenjang*. And with the Tempest Ore in his hand, Minhyuk hoped to obtain the best seasoning again.

Minhyuk quickly pulled out the grinder from his inventory.

- It can grind any ore or minerals.*
- The ground ore can change into whatever condiments or sauce you want. It will all depend on the artifact owner.*
- The better the ore, the better the flavor and the more special its power.*

Minhyuk immediately held the sealed Tempest Ore in his hands. According to the ore description, the owner could seal and unseal it at any moment.

*‘When the Mountain Ore was unsealed, the ground twisted and turned, and heaven and earth shook.’*

Minhyuk, in the presence of the transcendentals, had once witnessed what it was like to unseal one of Helenia’s Ores and the extent of its power. That was why he came out to the forest like this.

“Release the seal,” Minhyuk said. At the same time, a mighty wind blasted out of the ore. Its power could rival even that of a typhoon.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—

The strong wind blew Minhyuk's hair and pulled out the trees around him until they were flying in the air. Minhyuk grabbed the ore tightly and hurriedly pushed it into the grinder. The blowing wind quieted down the grinder when he put it in the grinder.

"Phew..." Minhyuk chuckled.

If Helenia saw him like this, she would not let him go.

Grind, grind, grind—!

The Transcendental's Grinder shook like crazy. And not long after, the notification rang.

[Please choose the condiment, seasoning, or sauce you wish to obtain from the Transcendental's Grinder.]

Minhyuk was already in possession of salt and *doenjang*. So, he no longer needed those two.

*'There's this condiment I have wanted to obtain for a long time.'*

Minhyuk grinned and said, "Sesame oil."

When one opened the lid of a can of sesame oil, one would be greeted with the savory, delicious, and mouthwatering smell that could stimulate one's sense of smell and appetite.

Grind, grind, grind—!

The Transcendental Grinder began grinding the Temperate Ore to create sesame oil. Finally, a notification rang.

[You have obtained 500 mL of Tempest Sesame Oil!]

"Kgghhk~" Minhyuk exclaimed.

He had not had a proper meal these past few days. The sesame oil was like the icing on the cake of the simplest dish that one could make using only the available ingredients at home when one was hungry. This dish was none other than soy sauce egg rice.

Minhyuk immediately removed his large cauldron lid and evenly spread a thin layer of cooking oil on it. Once heated, He cracked open an egg on top of it.

Sizzle, sizzle—!

A mouthwatering smell wafted from the lid as the egg danced around in the oil and slowly got fried. He let the egg cook until it was half cooked before scooping it out and gently putting it on top of a bowl of steaming hot rice. Then, Minhyuk sprinkled a few spoonfuls of soy sauce and some sesame oil on top of it.

The savory smell of the sesame oil had already started to tease and tickle his nose as he pressed the egg with his spoon and let the yolk flow down to the rice.

"Hoo..." With a small exhale, he smiled and began mixing the egg, rice, and soy sauce evenly.

The dark and tasty soy sauce egg rice was finally done. The best way to eat this dish was to scoop one huge spoonful and push it into one's mouth in one go. So, Minhyuk scooped a massive mouthful of the soy sauce egg rice and put it in his mouth.

*“Munch, munch, munch.”*

The savory and slightly salty flavor of the soy sauce egg rice immediately spread in Minhyuk’s mouth. The rich flavor of the egg followed immediately. Then, he took another bite.

Munch, munch, munch—

Minhyuk continued to enjoy his dish with the occasional crispy and well-ripened kimchi added to his spoon.

Crunch, crunch—

The soy sauce egg rice and the kimchi were a fantastic combination. Of course, it would also be good with some *kkakdugi*.

[You have consumed more than 5 mL of Tempest Sesame Oil.]

[Your Wind Attribute has increased permanently by 2%. Your EXP Acquisition Rate and attack power will increase by 3% for one week.]

[Your Wind Attribute will increase by 2% if you consume 5 mL of Tempest Sesame Oil in a week. You will also obtain a buff to increase your EXP Acquisition Rate and attack power by 3%.]

Tempest Sesame Oil could also be eaten ten consecutive times. Since it could increase the wind attribute by 2%, this meant that one could obtain a total of 20% increase in wind attribute.

After eating well, Minhyuk finally decided to check on the quest that he received after reaching Level 650.

Minhyuk looked at the quest window in confusion. *‘Hybrids?’*

Hybrids meant half-human beings. However, the scope of the world of hybrids was far too broad than what Minhyuk initially expected.

*‘There’s even a half-human, half-elf there?’*

Yes, although humans and elves no longer communicated, some humans and elves still developed a love for each other and bore children.

*‘It also says that half-dragon, half-human beings are among the dragon race.’*

And if Minhyuk went a bit deeper, then there should also be half-human, half-god beings.

*‘Half-human, half-god... perhaps there are also half-human, half-transcendental beings among them?’*

The world of the hybrids was far too wide and broad for him to predict and assume things. And since this was yet to be revealed, it would give him better rewards.

*‘There must be many delicious things in the World of Hybrids.’*

A delighted smile bloomed on Minhyuk’s face. From what Minhyuk could see, this quest was quite generous and considerate.

*‘The right to create skills related to the Food God, huh?’*

Minhyuk could obtain this reward once he completed the final quest. There was also an additional reward listed as “???”. This mainly was why he thought the quest was quite generous.

Minhyuk quickly sent a whisper to Abel.

Not long after, a very welcome voice rang in Minhyuk’s ears.

[Annoying brat, I found your candidate.]

“Oh...!”

It was none other than the voice of Guardian God Obren.

Minhyuk knew he had to carefully select the person who would receive the special privileges of the Growth Authority: The Ever-growing One.

*‘If your designated target fails to reach 100% growth level three times, you can terminate the authority one year after the date of designation.’* This was one of the explanations attached to the skill: The Ever-growing One. In other words, the skill would be tied up for one year of Athenae time. And it would be deemed useless if the designated target could not grow as much as the explanation required.

However, the best part was that the effects of this skill would prove to have more significant effects if they could find people who either could no longer grow or had faced limitations in their growth. If one looked at the skill closely, one would see that it could increase the target’s EXP Acquisition Rate by 1.5 to 10 times, an outstandingly high increase in number. It could also direct and guide the designated target in a direction that would allow them to grow faster.

Minhyuk had told Obren all of this before when he asked him for help, which meant that Obren had also considered everything.

[The target is a bit special. His name is Ralsden. He is one of you, currently at Level 50.]

“...?”

Minhyuk’s expression morphed into that of doubt. Is the player that Obren recommended only at Level 50?

“What are you talking about, Obren? Someone at Level 50 means he has only stepped into the world of Athenae. There’s no way such a player can be considered special, right?”

[No. He’s exceptional. I was torn between this man named Ralsden and the man named Brochen.]

“Desert’s Brochen?”

Minhyuk had heard about the man named Brochen. He was growing at a tremendous speed and was considered one of the emerging powerhouses. Although he was only at Level 450, it was said that he could fight and win against players at Level 550. These days, Brochen was in the spotlight for his excellent use of the desert eagle he had summoned in battle.

If they could apply The Ever-growing one to this person, he could develop quickly and become one of the high rankers. He would even be able to significantly boost the military power of the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

But Obren chose a player at Level 50 instead of the man named Brochen. However, Minhyuk did not argue with him and decided to listen first.

[Ralsden might be at Level 50, but his DEX is at 301.]

“...?!” Minhyuk was extremely surprised when he heard Obren’s words. “What...?”

[And if you combine his STR, STM, AGI, and other stats, his power would be equivalent to a Level 150 foreigner.]

Minhyuk could not understand how that was possible. His level was so low, but his stats were ridiculously high.

*‘Is his class Food God or something along those lines?’*

He felt like the man was just like him when he leveled up by eating all kinds of delicious dishes. No, perhaps he was far more impressive than him back then.

[I chose him because I saw his vast growth potential. But he’s a bit strange. He does not hunt monsters like you or the other foreigners. No, perhaps it would be more apt to say that he could not kill them?]

“...?”

Minhyuk’s doubt grew even more profound when he heard Ralsden could not kill monsters.

[I assume that he’s been increasing his level by completing the tasks that you guys receive. Nevertheless, his hard work makes his DEX, STR and the likes so high.]

*Hard work.* Minhyuk liked these words.

[Sometimes he would dig trees, sometimes pick up those things that you call miscellaneous items, and sometimes hit the scarecrow all day. He is trying and working so hard that I cannot understand it with my common sense. But what’s most interesting is that he would sell the trees and the items he collected daily.

[To be honest, at his level, he should have good artifacts on his body. But he only has the things given to the novice foreigners equipped on his body.]

Minhyuk’s mind started to spin quickly. He guessed as to why Ralsden might not be able to hunt.

*‘Perhaps...’*

There were very, very few people who could not adapt to Athenae because it felt too real.

*‘Even though he sold everything he acquired every time, his artifacts and equipment did not change.’*

The fact that he would sell what he collected meant that he was trading the gold that he acquired for money. Perhaps he needed quite a huge sum of money.

Minhyuk realized, *‘He’s making a living in Athenae.’*

[He cuts thousands of trees, collects thousands of grasses and miscellaneous items, and even strikes scarecrows to train and strengthen himself daily. I believe he is the person you are looking for. With his hard work and perseverance, once you give him the chance to grow, Ralsden will grow the fastest. This is what I have judged.]

However, it still did not make sense to him, even after putting all the puzzle pieces together.

*‘Wouldn’t it be much easier for him to gain more money if he increased his level? And with that much passion and hard work, there’s no way that he would not be able to hunt monsters just because he found them gross. So, why?’*

There was no way that someone with that much perseverance and endurance could not hunt monsters just because they were scared.

[However, at the end of it all, you will still be the one who will make the decision.]

But Obren’s opinion had piqued Minhyuk’s interest.

*‘If we can give him the chance to grow, then we might just be able to have a great powerhouse in just a few months.’*

Ralsden was a Level 50 player with the stats of a Level 150 player.

*‘I’ll have to find out about him quickly.’*

With his information network, Minhyuk could find out why Ralsden could not kill monsters.

\*\*\*

Tap– Tap– Tap–

The white cane rhythmically tapped the ground.

Han-Seong had already gone to three interviews today. However, he was left heartbroken after hearing the interviewers’ responses.

*–I’m not being sarcastic here. But if you can’t see it, I think you will have difficulty working at our company.*

*–I think other people will be uncomfortable with your presence.*

*–How about looking for a job that caters to the disabled?*

*–I’m very sorry to be the one to say this, but aren’t you being too greedy? It would be much easier for you to give up, right?*

A visually impaired and blind person would have a bad perception of the world. However, Han-Seong was a bit special.

*'I'm just having a bit of inconvenience. I'm no different from anybody else.'*

Han-Seong performed well during his studies at Korea University, one of the most prestigious universities in South Korea. As someone who lived excellently, he had a dream.

*'I want to live a cool and honorable life.'*

However, the reality was more challenging than he thought.

*'There's also a limit to how much one can make for a living in Athenae.'*

This was because he had to care for his mother, who also had special needs.

*'If only I could hunt...'*

Han-Seong did not have congenital blindness. He only became visually impaired after suffering from a car accident. The only world where he could see was Athenae.

He was pretty lucky.

*'I was fortunate to be one of the few selected by Joy Co. Ltd. to join their project that supported the disabled.'*

The capsule that he had received was quite good. However, after the accident, he developed a post-traumatic stress disorder, which made it impossible for him to harm or kill anything.

However, Han-Seong enjoyed living in that world so much. Not only could he see it, but he could also get anything just with his own effort and hard work. But now, he was thinking of stopping. It seemed like he could no longer play the game that he loved.

*'Money. I need money.'*

He was not living in this world alone, only for his sake. There were others that he needed to care for. Nevertheless, his thoughts of living a decent and honorable life remained unchanged. He even promised to gain the money that would help him go abroad and get new corneas that would allow him to see the world again.

Han-Seong, who participated in three different interviews today, finally stopped walking. He asked, "Is this the Ilhwa Group?"

"Yes, that's correct."

He politely asked for directions. And when he finally reached his destination, he let out a trembling breath. Han-Seong knew that the Ilhwa Group had accepted and employed many disabled people.

*'Of course, I think it's just for show.'*

It was not just Ilhwa Group; most companies hired the disabled, but most of them did it for show.

Although he was nervous, Han-Seong was not afraid. He walked until he reached the waiting room for the interview and waited for his turn. Not long after, he was guided to sit on a chair.

Then, the voice of a young man rang in his ears. The young man said, "I'm a bit inexperienced, so I hope you will understand. Is that alright?"

Han-Seong might not be able to see, but he was sure that the interviewer's voice in front of him was very familiar.

*'Where have I heard this voice?'* Han-Seong thought, confusion flashing on his face.

Chapter 969

Minhyuk immediately went to his Uncle Munsoo to learn about Ralsden, the candidate who received the effects of the skill: The Ever-growing One. Park Munsoo, his father's secretary, was quite versatile with his work and brought him the information he required in just half a day.

When he read the information, he found one thing very surprising.

*–He applied for Ilhwa Group's new recruitment and is set to be interviewed today.*

Minhyuk immediately ran to Ilhwa Group's headquarters when he saw that. Currently, Minhyuk was not only in charge of his empire in Athenae but was also in charge of the Royal Department Store and many other subsidiaries as training to become the next chairman. Because of that, he could sit inside the interview room as a particular interviewer.

He watched as one of their employees helped a man sit in the chair before them. The man sat still, his gaze unfocused.

*'He's Kim Han-Seong,'* Minhyuk thought as he recalled the information, which included his resume, that he had obtained from Uncle Munsoo.

*'During his student days, his interpersonal relationships and leadership skills were so outstanding that he went from an ordinary student to class president. However, when he turned eighteen, he got caught in an accident. He became blind and is now suffering from PTSD.'*

One of Minhyuk's questions, why he could not hunt even though he was trying and working so hard in Athenae, had probably been solved by that information.

*'It's most likely because of his PTSD, no?'*

The probability of that being the case was extremely high. PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, was kind of an after-effect that people who had experienced life-and-death situations suffer from.

*'He's amazing.'* Minhyuk looked at Kim Han-Seong's resume in admiration.

A year after the accident, he returned to school and maintained the grades he usually had before the accident. That was not all. The rewards that he had received were also great.

Minhyuk was not sure if he could say something like this. But he thought, *'He's like me.'*

Yes, they were similar. The thought brought a small smile to his face.

Then, one of the other interviewers asked, "What was your reason for applying to our company?"

This question was one of the usual questions asked during interviews. Since it was that kind of question, the answer that they would receive would naturally be just like the usual.

“Ilhwa Group is one of the leading companies of South Korea...”

“If you ever encounter these situations, what will you...”

“If I am put in that situation, I will...”

Minhyuk nodded as he listened to the conversation. After some questions, one of the other interviewers asked, “You will face many inconveniences as you live your life in the company. This would especially be the case for someone like you, who is visually impaired. It would be quite disadvantageous for you to work in a hectic and bustling company. Moreover, the other employees must be more considerate and careful around you.”

This was why companies were reluctant to hire disabled people even though they had extraordinary talents. These talents would need the help of their colleagues and co-workers.

“Of course, I would receive a lot of help. I believe I would still need the help of someone else to navigate myself and go to the bathroom at the beginning,” Han-Seong answered calmly.

“But I’m sure I will help them someday, too.”

Han-Seong was very confident of that. When he won those awards, he also needed the help of many people. However, he was confident that he could help them in turn.

The interviewers nodded, satisfied smiles flashing on their faces. However, Han-Seong could not see their expressions and grew anxious by the second.

*‘What if this place is no different from the other companies?’*

Many companies hire people with disabilities just for publicity. These companies would often just put the employed disabled people into positions that would remain at the corner of their respective companies.

Just as he was about to spiral down into his anxiousness, Han-Seong heard the very familiar and young voice ask him, “I want your real answer, not just a superficial and practiced answer. Can you answer me like that?”

“Of course.”

“What is the real reason that you applied to Ilhwa Group?”

There were many practiced answers to this question.

I have dreamt of joining the Ilhwa Group for a long time.

I am determined to help make the Ilhwa Group the best corporation in the world.

However, Han-Seong was asked to throw away all of these things. He remained silent as he pondered over the question. But it did not take too long for him to answer.

“I wanted to live.”

At that moment, Minhyuk recalled the introduction that Carron had used in the video titled “The Burden an Emperor Carries,” which he had previously edited.

*–I wanted to live.*

That was right. Minhyuk wanted to live. That was what made him what he is now.

It was said that the world would not be able to win against someone who enjoyed what they were doing.

*‘As long as you enjoy your work, you can grow even further.’*

Wasn’t that what people wanted to live for?

Minhyuk shuddered. *‘I can’t wait to see how he will perform in Ilhwa Group and Athenae a year from now.’*

According to the details of The Ever-growing One, it could help nurture and develop those who had reached their limits or could not grow for some reason.

*‘In other words, it might help him increase his level without hunting monsters. Since he has PTSD, there’s no need for him to deal with the enemies by himself.’*

The Ever-growing One would likely guide Kim Han-Seong to the class best suited for him. If one considered his effort, patience, and perseverance, no one would be able to estimate how much growth he would experience in that year.

Meanwhile, Han-Seong gulped dryly after no longer hearing any questions. *‘As expected, everything is the same...’*

“I like you the most out of all the people we have met today.”

“Me too. If I were to pick one today, I would pick you.”

“You might need help from others, but you will be able to help others, too. That’s cool and nice.”

Contrary to his expectations, the interviewers began to heap compliments on him.

For the first time, Han-Seong was puzzled and confused. Usually, people would not get any notice of acceptance during the first interview. However, the interviewers said that Han-Seong was extremely close to passing their recruitment.

“Chairman Kang Minhoo has always advocated giving everyone a fair chance,” the familiar voice said. “And based on the hard work, passion, and confidence that Mr. Kim Han-Seong has shown us so far, I believe we will receive good results if we have you in our ranks.”

Minhyuk firmly believed that Han-Seong would pass Ilhwa Group’s recruitment and join the company. This was not only because of his judgment and opinion. All of the interviewers were most likely of the same mind as him just by hearing the positive responses that they had given. So, he struck while the iron was hot.

“And Mr. Kim Han-Seong, I would like to offer you a special recruitment personally...”

“A special recruitment?” Kim Han-Seong’s doubt grew even more when he heard that.

He just could not understand. Wasn’t he just about to pass the Ilhwa Group’s recruitment? Why was he suddenly being offered a special recruitment?

Minhyuk smiled faintly and said, “...in Athenae.”

\*\*\*

Ralsden, who had accessed Athenae, was left in doubt and confusion.

*‘Is this some sort of hidden camera prank?’*

The young man’s familiar voice introduced himself as Minhyuk in the interview room. He said that he wanted to hire him in Athenae—or, to be exact, to bring him into the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

At that moment, Ralsden could not help but question himself. *‘Why? Why on earth do you want to take in someone like me?’*

The Beyond the Heavens Empire was a haven filled with high-rankers. It was a nation all players hoped to join and was the subject of everyone’s envy. It was also the only empire that bravely stood against the Luvien Empire. And the emperor of a place like that said that he wanted to scout him and bring him to their ranks?

*‘Isn’t this a bit too much?’*

If this were a hidden camera prank, then Ralsden would be furious. Were they doing this to him, who was already inconvenienced and living uncomfortably? Of course, this also wouldn’t make sense. But between the two, Minhyuk scouting the Level 50 him was the one that did not make any more sense.

*‘After all, he became the greatest Absolute God, the Battle God.’*

Although he had yet to obtain the Battle God’s full power, he was already the holiest and noblest existence.

At that moment, someone came out to personally meet and guide Ralsden, who had arrived at the Beyond the Heavens Empire.

“...”

*‘It’s true?’*

In the world of Athenae, Ralsden could see. Although Athenae could not cure mental illnesses, including PTSD, players could overcome inconveniences like blindness and other physical disabilities inside virtual reality.

And right now, Ralsden was standing face to face with the noble and majestic Beyond the Heavens’ Emperor Minhyuk. Ralsden’s heart was thumping like crazy as he uttered the question he had asked himself repeatedly.

“Why...”

Why someone like me?

Not only was he blind, but he was also someone who could not hunt monsters in Athenae because of his PTSD.

Aristotle said, *"Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet."*

Someone also left a quote saying, *"Will and determination, hard work, and patience are the keys to success."*

Because of those words, Ralsden had been able to endure, even when people around him told him otherwise.

*–Why don't you stop now?*

*–Isn't it hard? If it's hard, then you should just give up.*

But Ralsden remained consistent. He never changed.

*–No. I will not give up and fall apart. There will come a day when my flower road will bloom, too.*

Unfortunately, someone told him to his face.

*–But... you cannot see.*

Those words shocked him greatly. That was right. Perhaps effort and hard work would bear fruit, but that would only apply to ordinary people. Maybe he could not achieve what he wanted, no matter how hard he tried. After failing interviews with dozens of companies, he had been painfully aware of this fact.

Minhyuk looked at him and said, "I'm considering hiring you as a special employee for two years. Your annual income would be 200 million won."

High rankers could earn billions of won in a year. Although Minhyuk was a good man, he was also the emperor and the next chairman of the Ilhwa Group. The Beyond the Heavens Empire could be considered a company now. That was why he had to consider the profits and losses he would incur.

"Of course, there are conditions. In those two years, you must turn over 90% of your revenue in Athenae to the Beyond the Heavens Empire."

Minhyuk was thinking about Ralsden's growth and development in the future. He was sure he would be equivalent in prowess to some of their high-rankers. In other words, he bought a fantastic talent for such a small price. However, this was not considered as him wringing Ralsden out. After all, he would be the only one to open up his potential and help him grow.

"After the contract ends, you must live in the Beyond the Heavens Empire and serve under my rule."

The conditions were ridiculous. This was because Minhyuk wanted to make it so Ralsden would be one of his people as quickly as possible.

"Will you accept it?"

[The Beyond the Heavens' Emperor Minhyuk proposes that you move to the Beyond the Heavens Empire.]

Ralsden hurriedly accepted. He even moved as if he were willing to fulfill all of the clauses of the contract that were presented to him.

*'Is this a dream?'*

Just when the thought flashed, he saw Minhyuk pointing at him with a small smile. Then, Minhyuk said, "The Ever-growing One."

Immediately after that, a notification rang in Ralsden's ears.

[The Growth Authority rests upon you!]

[Your EXP Acquisition Rate will increase by at least 1.5x to at most 10x!]

[The Growth Authority: The Ever-growing One is observing you.]

[The Growth Authority is shocked after observing you!]

Ralsden's face was filled with confusion when he heard the notifications. Of course, Minhyuk, who used the skill on him, could also hear a similar set of notifications.

*'As expected, choosing him was not wrong.'*

The Ever-growing One was a skill that allowed those who worked hard, had passion, and had perseverance to grow further.

[The Growth Authority: The Ever-growing One will exhibit more special power!]

[Your EXP Acquisition Rate will increase by three times right away!]

[The Growth Authority: The Ever-growing One wonders why you failed to grow and develop!]

[The Growth Authority: The Ever-growing One begins to search for a new class that will help you grow and develop!]

The notifications above made Minhyuk's eyes grow wide. *'It's going to give him a new class right away?!'*

This skill was one of the godly and divine powers in the Battle God's possession. He did not expect that it would exert this much power.

*'Was it because Ralsden is just that special? I wonder how it would solve Ralsden's aversion to hunting monsters, hmm?'*

However, thinking about it was no use. The Ever-growing One had already found a class that suited Ralsden among the tens of thousands of classes.

Ring!

[Changing the legendary class: Master of Hard Work and Labor!]

Ring!

[The conditions for promoting the legendary class: Master of Hard Work and Labor have been met!]

Ring!

[You have been transferred to the God Class: Descendant of the God of Hard Work and Labor!]

“...?”

Minhyuk and Ralsden were both stunned, speechless at the whirlwind of events that happened so suddenly.

*‘That’s crazy...’*

This situation was also wholly unexpected for Minhyuk. But the notifications were not yet over.

*‘Does this mean that Ralsden has already met all of the requirements for becoming the God of Hard Work and Labor, which is why it's guiding him to the Life Summoner's Path?’*

Ralsden had developed his DEX to a high degree by repeatedly doing hard labor. That probably satisfied the conditions for the Descendant of the God of Hard Work and Labor. On the other hand, he still had not met the conditions for becoming a Life Summoner.

*‘If he becomes a summoner, he would not need to kill the monsters alone.’*

It even solved his problems because of his PTSD.

“How can I get a subclass all at once?”

It was so shocking that even Ralsden, who was involved himself, could not understand the situation.

“Why did my class suddenly become a God class...? And there’s also the Life Summoner Class, which is legendary.”

Ralsden once again questioned everything that happened to him.

*‘Why? Why someone like me?’*

Minhyuk smiled at him and said, “Because you tried and worked hard.”

Ralsden pondered over Minhyuk’s words. Then, he quietly recited, *‘Will and determination, hard work, and patience are the keys to success.’*

That was right. Ralsden was now finally receiving the rewards for his hard work and patience.

Chapter 970

After Ralsden turned blind, no one recognized his hard work, effort, and patience anymore. But Minhyuk, who stood at the highest position in Athenae, said, “Because you tried and worked hard.”

When he heard those words, tears started to flow down Ralsden’s cheeks. He had been enduring and holding on by mulling over the quotes those famous people had left behind.

He felt pleased and grateful because the person in front of him differed from the others, who told him to give up and no longer try. After all, he could no longer see. Ralsden bit his lips tightly.

“Forever...” He wiped his tears and continued, “...I will forever do my best in Athenae for you and the Beyond the Heavens Empire’s sake.”

Minhyuk knew that the vow that Ralsden, who had a firm belief and strong will that far surpassed others, would never be broken.

*‘It’s because you’re just like me,’* Minhyuk thought.

There was something he wanted to do for Ralsden. Why?

*‘Because you have probably tried and worked harder than anybody else.’*

This act was purely because he wanted to help. This was not done to help enhance his empire’s power, nor because he wanted to profit off Ralsden. Minhyuk was doing this purely of his own accord. He only used his funds, the same funds he had earned and saved in Athenae.

“We’re already looking for a cornea donor match for you at Seoul Hospital. I believe things are moving smoothly and quickly, so we will hear from them soon.”

“...!”

Seoul Hospital was hailed as one of the best hospitals in South Korea and was an affiliate of Ilhwa Group.

“This is just because I like you as a person. It’s not because I want to receive something from you.”

Ralsden collapsed when he heard Minhyuk’s words. He vowed to do everything for Minhyuk and the Beyond the Heavens Empire. But now, he changed his mind.

“Even if I have to die, I will do so as long as it is for your sake...!”

If he were asked to die, then he would die. If he were asked to live, then he would live. If anyone dared to touch this man in front of him, then he would be the one to kill that person personally. This was the vow that One-man Corps Ralsden, who would surprise the world one year later, had made.

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When Ralsden’s cries finally subsided, Minhyuk thought, *‘He worked hard enough to have power comparable to Level 150 even though he was only at Level 50 to the point that he became the God of Hard Work and Labor.’*

Perhaps they had helped him awaken much earlier. But it was primarily thanks to his efforts.

Minhyuk was curious about what Ralsden had obtained after he was given a new class and direction for growth.

“By any chance, have you received special privileges by becoming the God of Hard Work and Labor?”

Minhyuk had now become Ralsden’s master. So, this question did not offend him at all. He replied quickly and without hesitation, “A five-times basic DEX effect has been applied to me.”

“...?”

“It also said that my DEX Acquisition Rate has increased five times.”

“...?”

“Ah! There’s also a special skill. It’s a passive skill called ‘The One who Receives Rewards,’” Ralsden said as he checked the skill carefully.

Then, he began to relay the information. “Whenever I do hard work and labor, my yield and acquisition rate will increase by 0.5x. It also says that monsters hunted by the God of Hard Work and Labor will have a 0.3x increase in artifact drop rate and EXP acquisition rate.”

“...?” Minhyuk, in awe, asked, “By any chance, does it say that the skill is at Level 1?”

“Yes. Ah. Every time the level increases, everything related to hard work and labor would increase by 0.2x.”

Minhyuk was now indeed left in shock. *‘I feel a bit jealous...?’*

This meant that if the skill *The One who Receives* reached Level 9, then all of the rewards Ralsden would receive through hard work and labor would double.

*‘The more shocking part is that there are skills that can go beyond Level 9.’*

What if the skill evolved after reaching that point?

*‘Isn’t this cheat-like?’*

To put the skill in a more straightforward perspective, imagine Minhyuk harvesting one potato, but he could obtain two. That was how the skill was.

Then, Minhyuk suddenly thought, *‘If I had that skill, then I would probably be able to double the number of dishes I want to obtain.’*

Perhaps it would also answer his recent Food God’s Quest.

According to the reward, he could have the right to create a skill related to the Food God. The word “create” meant that he had to make one. In other words, Minhyuk would have to create a new Food God skill.

*‘Most of the Food God’s skills are related to buffs or for the sake of just eating.’*

Of course, Minhyuk always wanted to find a way to help him eat more delicious dishes and give him happiness and satisfaction. He continued to ponder over the matter as he looked at Ralsden.

*‘I can work as a farmer, sow seeds, and cultivate the field. But what if the yield becomes better?’* Minhyuk shook his head at the thought. *‘That’s Rumble’s role.’*

Since Minhyuk had Rumble, the Spirit of Life, and the one who possessed the skill to increase the crop yield, this was an effect that could be considered unnecessary for Minhyuk. So, he tried to think a bit differently.

*‘Every time I finish eating delicious dishes, I feel it’s a pity.’*

God-grade ingredients were very delicious. Minhyuk felt it was a pity that so many God-grade ingredients would be gone after one single dish. After all, once they had disappeared, one could never obtain something like that again. Simply put, he would not be able to eat it again.

*‘And it’s even more painful because I already know what they tasted like.’* This thought had constantly plagued Minhyuk’s mind. And, of course, he also thought, *‘I want to get my hands on them again.’*

However, there was no such method in Athenae up until a minute ago.

*‘Creating skills related to the Food God means that I can also make skills related to cooking and ingredients, no?’* a sparkle appeared in Minhyuk’s eyes. *‘What if I could extract some of the God-grade ingredients I have obtained and turn them into seeds?’*

And what if God-grade ingredients would grow again once he planted and cultivated that seed?

“...!”

A glint appeared in Minhyuk’s eyes.

*‘That would be crazy.’*

Minhyuk’s heart started to throb from the excitement.

*‘An ability that will help me grow God-grade ingredients!’*

No, it did not have to be limited to God-grade ingredients. It could include medicines and elixirs that could permanently increase stats.

If Minhyuk could complete his quest and create a skill like this, then it would not necessarily be a dream.

*‘A field of God-grade ingredients!’*

It has been a long time since Minhyuk felt this excited.

And finally, Minhyuk’s long-awaited whisper came in.

Minhyuk, who had received Abel’s whisper, immediately told Ralsden to show off the new abilities that he received as the new Descendant of the God of Hard Work and Labor before leaving.

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Minhyuk sat in front of Abel. Abel immediately relayed the information he had obtained the moment he appeared.

“According to the information I have gathered, the World of Hybrids has existed for a long time. Based on the records, the highest number of hybrids living there were half-human, half-elves. But it was not only them. There were a variety of hybrids among them, too. There were special ones among them like half-human, half-god and half-human, half-transcendentals.”

Abel admitted that he was not sure about the following information either.

“I think their world used to have exchanges with the human world. But I have now confirmed that our connection with them no longer existed.”

Abel’s face was wry when he looked up at Minhyuk. He said, “It seems like you expected this much, huh?”

As Abel had guessed, most things he had said were what Minhyuk had already expected. The fact that Abel could only obtain this much information meant that the World of Hybrids was still hidden under a thick veil.

When it came to worlds like this, it usually gave plenty of exceptional rewards. But it also meant that it was a very dangerous world.

“It’s a world where half-human, half-gods and half-human, half-transcendentals lived. Although their exact numbers were not confirmed, it proved that it is a perilous place.”

Even if they were only half-god, they would still be beings that possessed divine power. And the same would be true for half-transcendentals with the power of the transcendentals.

“Don’t worry,” Abel said when he saw Minhyuk shaking his head. Then, he continued to explain, “I found a way to get there. Have you heard about Continental Master Aesden?”

“Of course, I have heard about him.”

Continental Master Aesden was one of the Continental Mages and was known to be someone capable of sending anyone anywhere on the continent.

“From what I had gathered, he’s a very stubborn, picky, and greedy old man.”

Aesden not only could send anyone anywhere on the continent, but he could also send them to various hidden quests and new hunting grounds. Of course, this would only be for those who had received the opportunity or those who had received Aesden’s recognition and permission.

“I don’t think that picky and stubborn old man would send you to the World of Hybrids. Especially since no one had ever been sent there before.”

This was Abel’s most significant concern. However, Minhyuk paid no heed and immediately stood up from his seat. Since there was a way for him to reach the World of Hybrids, Minhyuk could take one step closer to his dreams of creating a field brimming with God-grade ingredients.

“Thanks, Abel! I’ll buy you a meal later!” Minhyuk greeted him with the most common Korean greeting and hurriedly left.

Meanwhile, the words that Abel wanted to tell him got stuck in his throat. He could not say it to his face and could only murmur sadly, “You said you’d buy me a meal, but you ended up eating my share, too...”

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Many had said that Continental Master Aesden was Athenae's chosen *guide*. Just like what was mentioned before, Aesden could guide players to hidden quests or any other places they wanted to go, even to another world. Even the locations of new and undiscovered dungeons. There was no place in this world that he did not know of.

However, it was said that Aesden had the power to see through people's inner thoughts. Because of this, even the kings and emperors had to be courteous to him even though he charged more than ten times the price of a typical warp. To be exact, the price that he set would be entirely up to him.

The Warp Tower's tower master, Aesden, once again looked at the long line of people before their gates.

"I found a hint about the Heavenly Archer. It is said that the Heavenly Archer is slumbering in a tomb hidden deep below the ground. Do you know where it is?" One of the players asked when he finally got his turn.

Aesden, a gray-haired old man, narrowed his eyes as he stroked his long beard. Then, he said, "I know everything."

"Is that true?!"

The man had spent hundreds of days trying to find information about the Heavenly Archer. However, he failed to find anything useful. But Aesden knew about the Heavenly Archer.

"How much is it? If your information is true, I will give you everything that I have," the man asked.

Aesden said, "Well, you only need to play a million platinum."

"I see. A million gold, huh? It's much cheaper than I have heard... huh- what?"

A million platinum was enough to fund a kingdom for an entire year. Wasn't it too expensive to pay just to get one hint about a legendary class?

"What..."

"Fufu. Someone who lacks the qualifications dares to ask me about the Heavenly Master. Shouldn't you pay a huge price for that if you really want to know?"

The man's face turned red. The man was already over Level 400 and could handle the bow better than anybody else. What did this old man mean by his lacking qualifications?

Seeing the man's face flush with anger, Aesden said, "If you're not convinced, put your hand on this crystal ball."

The red-faced man hurriedly placed his hand on the crystal ball. Not long after, Aesden closed his eyes to observe and examine the man. When Aesden opened his eyes, he said, "That's right. Yes. That price is quite ridiculous."

"Haha. As expected. Then..."

"Ten million platinum. You bastard should give me ten million platinum."

That was how much he lacked the qualifications for the class. The player's already red face turned a deeper shade of red from anger.

"You f\*cking bastard! You're just an NPC bastard. What do you know...?!"

The player spent more than a year trying to obtain this class. The problem was that he still could not get the class even though he had received the skills. It was only by luck that he could find a clue about it.

Now that the thing he had worked so hard on seemed to disappear and turn into nothing in front of his eyes, the player could not hold back his anger. However, Aesden was no ordinary NPC.

"Take this bastard and lock him up in jail for a year."

"Yes, sir!"

The mages immediately dragged the player away. Being locked up in jail was the most terrible punishment that a player could receive.

As shocking as it might sound, one must know that Aesden would never bow down and remain arrogant even if a king came before him. That was just how powerful and influential he was. If there were a God of Spatial Transfer, that would be Aesden.

They had only heard rumors about him, but when they saw this unfold, the arrogant, high-ranking nobles immediately behaved and lined up politely.

Aesden, who saw them, found it funny. *'Fufu. These f\*cking bastards.'*

Perhaps Aesden's existence was the most necessary in the entire world of Athenae. His existence served as a reminder to those following false and far-fetched dreams.

Then, Aesden saw a man dressed shabbily standing in front of him. The man's mouth was covered in oil as if he had just finished eating something.

"*Tsk, tsk,*" Aesden clicked his tongue as he looked at the man arrogantly.

Then, the man, who spoke in a small voice that no one else could hear, said, "Do you know the way to the World of Hybrids?"

"...!" Aesden's eyes grew wide when he heard that. "Did you say the World of Hybrids?"

This was the first time he had heard someone ask him about this since he had sat in this position. This was because there was far too little information about that world. It was to the point that Aesden had to wonder where this man got the information from. However, even if the emperor came, Aesden could not open a path for them to the World of Hybrids.

*'If humans go to that world, a war will surely take place and ravage both worlds.'*

So, Aesden said, "I know about it. Let's see. How about paying a hundred million platinum?"

"A- A hundred million?!"

"Did he just say a hundred million platinum?!"

“Hoho... whatever that guy wants, it must have been extremely ridiculous.”

“Maybe he wants to go to the Land of the Gods? Hohoho!”

“Bastard! This guy. Know your place!”

The nobles at the back clicked their tongues and shouted. However, the man was completely different from the player before.

“That price is probably right. After all, this is a new world. However, I don’t have that much money on hand. Is there something else that I can do?”

Aesden looked at the man in interest. *‘He is still this calm even after hearing such a ridiculous amount of money?’*

The person in front of Aesden might have a much more extensive background than what he looked like. However, even if that was the case, Aesden could still not allow anyone to go there.

“Please put your hand on this crystal ball.”

Aesden closed his eyes when the man placed his hand on the crystal ball and began looking through his being.

Crack, crack, crack, crack–

Cracks began to appear all over the crystal ball.