

## Gourmet 991

### Chapter 991

After asking Abel to find information about Jack-of-all-Trade Rocado, Minhyuk asked Obren, “Obren, do you know anything about Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado?”

Just like Rocado, Obren was also one of the Eight Pillars. On top of that, Obren had a vast and deep trove of knowledge. Then, Obren answered.

[I don’t know the exact details either. But I know what Alvier was talking about. Rocado is superior to the God of Blacksmiths. He is also superior to the God of Cooking. Even his paintings looked like they were alive and moving.]

However, there was something strange.

“Why can’t we find any of the things that he made in the world?”

Of course, there was a high chance that the Athenae Operators would have made it hard for anyone to get to them since they were content that should not be released to the world yet. But these days, information about the Eight Pillars was being unraveled individually. But for some reason, there was still no information about any of the artifacts or items that Rocado had made.

[They’re all hidden somewhere.]

Minhyuk nodded. Anyway, his doubts would be solved once he met the man. However, he could not help but worry.

“What if he’s also like Helenia...?”

If that was the case, then Minhyuk meeting the man would be similar to waking up a sleeping beast for no reason. But then, Obren snorted.

[I don’t think that’s the case at all. Just think about it. If he wanted to do that, he should have done so.]

As expected of Obren, his words were truly rational and credible. At that moment, a whisper from Abel came.

The difference between knowing and not knowing was indeed like the difference between heaven and earth. A clue immediately came out when they tried to find out about Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado.

A god had a friendly relationship with Rocado? When he heard this, Minhyuk thought things might work out more easily than he initially thought.

The problem was Abel's reaction was not quite right. He reacted negatively to Minhyuk's words.

It was possible. After all, the Land of the Gods was entirely separate from the land of humans. Perhaps Obren did not know much about Rocado because he had been slumbering for a very long time, or maybe because he was just completely unaware.

It was natural for the gods to visit Herakel after they obtained such information, which also proved how much they needed Rocado.

"...?"

Minhyuk was quite surprised. What kind of existence were the gods? They were omnipotent beings. But these gods were beaten with a club and kicked out by Herakel?

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In the Black Land located inside the Land of the Gods.

The Black Land gained its moniker because everything from the soil to the trees was black. The gods mostly forgot about this land. After all, there were no crops, and the sun did not shine upon it well.

The God of Strength Herakel lived in a cave in the Black Land. Today, another god could be seen walking toward his residence. The god was none other than the God of Alcohol Edona.

Rumors circulated among a small number of people, including the gods, about how Herakel was closely associated with Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado.

The God of Alcohol Edona wanted Rocado to craft an outstanding goblet, a goblet that could make the flavor of any alcohol better and deeper. As for the rumors, Edona dismissed them. After all, they were far too ridiculous.

*'A god can beat up another god with just a club?'*

It was bullshit. And even if a god was capable of doing that, the Battle God would not let them go. Edona firmly believed that it was nonsense.

*'Lies. They are lies created by those who failed to get information and meet with Rocado.'*

Of course, Edona did not come to visit empty-handed. He had brought a bottle of wine made by collecting drops for a thousand years.

*'Millenium Wine.'*

Edonia wanted to trade his Millenium Wine for Rocado's services.

As he continued walking, he saw the cave where Herakel was said to be residing.

*'From what I heard, he has not left his cave for a very long time.'*

The thought flashed in Edonia's head when he saw Herakel's figure, a figure he had only heard about, come out.

*'It seems like they're lying.'*

Didn't they tell him that Herakel never went out of his cave? However, there was something that checked out with the information that he had heard before.

*'An old and shabby club. Topless. Body filled with strong and tough muscles. Two meters tall.'*

Edona was sure this man was the Herakel he had only heard of from the rumors. A wide smile appeared on his face.

"You must be Herakel?"

However, Herakel did not answer. He approached him one step at a time, looking like he had something urgent to do.

From what Edona had heard, Herakel was just a Continental God. That was why he felt pretty offended at the fact that the man had ignored him. However, he stamped down the irritation and raised the bottle of wine in his hand while saying, "This is a bottle of wine made from drops of wine for a thousand years. If you come with me..."

Herakel remained silent and just continued on his way.

Grab—

But just when he was about to pass by Edona, Edona grabbed his arm and said, "How about a talk, hmm? I'll give you this drink. Let's have a drink and talk about the man named Rocado."

"Rocado."

Edona realized that something was off. When Herakel heard “Rocado,” his eyes immediately turned red. Then, Herakel asked, “Do you know Gaerna’s Life Elixir? The elixir that can save even the gods?”

*‘Gaerna’s Life Elixir?’*

Of course, Edona knew about it. One of the Six Monster Gods, Gaerna, possessed an elixir. And from what he knew, Gaerna’s Life Elixir had been obtained by the next generation Battle God.

At that moment, Edona found something strange. *‘But why is he looking for a life elixir? Wait...’*

Herakel was the closest being to Rocado. When he heard Rocado’s name, his eyes turned red, and he looked like he was about to shed tears.

*‘And from what I heard, Herakel is lacking in the head.’*

The God of Strength, powerful enough to destroy a mountain, might be strong and powerful, but he was pretty dim-witted. However, Edona knew that Gaerna’s Life Elixir could not save him from that.

*‘Is Rocado going to die soon?’*

Edona could not help but think so. Just like humans, gods were also filled with greed. At this moment, Edona thought he had to get his outstanding *goblet*. Rocado had to make one for him.

*‘Even if he’s dying, he has to make me one before he dies!’*

“Hoho. I don’t know about that elixir, but maybe he will get better if he gets a taste of my alcohol.”

“Liar. The only thing that can save a dying person is Gaerna’s Life Elixir.”

“...”

The man immediately caught Edona’s lies he thought was a fool. Realizing that the dim-witted Herakel had caught his lies, Edona could not help but grow angry.

“Bastard! How dare you! Do you not know who I am?! You’re nothing but a mere Continental God! Bring me to where Rocado is right now!”

Edona crossed a line that he should not have crossed at all. Looking deeper into Herakel’s words, one would realize that Edona was already in danger. The problem was he made it worse by demanding that the man take him to where Rocado was because of his greed. In other words, Edona did not care about whatever happened to Rocado afterward as long as he got his goblet.

At that moment, Edona saw Herakel raise the club in his hand. Then, he heard the man say, “My club. Endure eight blows.”

“...?”

“If you endure eight times, you can beat me eight times in return. And Rocado’s location. I will tell you.”

Thud!!!

Edona felt that his surroundings were spinning after the club struck him. The most important part to note here was that he received tremendous damage despite it being only a simple swing of the club. After all, he should know that there was no indication that Herakel had used any skill or divine power when he swung it toward him.

“Keuhaaaaaaack!”

“One.”

Fwoooooosh–

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

“Two.”

“S– Stop! I don’t want to know! STOP!!!”

He had only been hit twice, but Edona felt like all of the bones in his body had been broken. He thought that he might die if the third hit came down upon him.

*‘No. I think I will die.’*

Gods could live forever. But that was only because they no longer aged. It would be different if they received physical damage.

Herakel just passed by the gasping Edona, who had collapsed on the ground, while muttering, “Gaerna’s... Life Elixir... Must find.”

Edona felt his anger rise as he watched Herakel’s gradually departing back. Contrary to the rumors, Herakel had left his cave and was heading toward where the gods lived.

Edona continued to stare at Herakel’s figure. At this moment, he thought this man would become a massive threat to the Land of the Gods. He thought, *‘You f\*cking bastard. The Battle God will punish you.’*

Then, Edona turned into a flash of light and disappeared.

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Minhyuk had already finished all the preparations he needed to go to the Land of the Gods long ago.

“The Battle God’s advertisement video will be finished in two weeks. If it is truly as Your Majesty says, and we can complete Evangel with your statues, portraits, artifact samples, and the like, we can create a synergistic effect with the video.”

Minhyuk nodded. There was a smile on his face as he prepared to leave.

*‘Since Rocado is like the father of dexterity, he would have excellent cooking ingredients with him, right?’*

If the Special Players Management Team members had known what Minhyuk was thinking about, they would have probably screamed, *‘Please let us go home!’* at him.

Just as he was about to leave, a sudden notification appeared before Minhyuk.

Ring!

Ring!

Minhyuk could not help but look puzzled after checking the contents of the quest. A quest about Herakel, whom Minhyuk would find, suddenly came to him. However, there was one crucial point written in the quest.

*‘He’s going on a rampage?’*

How much ruckus was he making for this notification to appear before Minhyuk? And from what he could infer from the notifications, he could already assume what would happen.

“Herakel will die soon.”

Of course, Minhyuk still did not know what the quest wanted from him.

Minhyuk, unaware of the exact situation, immediately warped to the Land of the Gods.

Chapter 992

The Land of the Gods was home to the gods and ordinary people. The ordinary people living in the Land of the Gods were called the celestial dwellers, while the troops protecting them were the Heavenly Army.

Each of the gods was considered the founder and father of their field of expertise. But that did not mean that the gods were the only ones who could become the fathers of their fields; there were also others.

They were none other than the Heavenly Captains. They weren’t gods or beings that were exceptional in one field. Although they were not inferior to the gods, they weren’t specialized in anything like the *Sword God*.

Most of them belonged to the Heavenly Army and had polished and trained themselves in using various weapons until they were recognized and given the title of Heavenly Captain.

There were ten Heavenly Captains in total. And Fifth, Captain Rox had heard from the God of Wine that Mad Dog Herakel was coming to the Land of the Gods and would be a massive threat to them.

*‘Why is Herakel, who had been hiding for a long time, coming out into the world?’*

Rox did not know who Herakel was until now. However, he had heard the story from Edona.

*‘He’s the God of Strength and a mad dog.’*

Even so, Rox was not afraid. *‘Most of the gods he beat went to find him alone.’*

The Heavenly Captains were not weak. They were not inferior to any of the gods. Besides, Rox had already formed a defensive line with tens of thousands of well-trained Heavenly Soldiers facing the direction where the said mad dog would be coming from. And that was not all. These long lines of shieldbearers, which could rival the Great Wall of China, were the “Iron Shield” raised and nurtured by the God of Shields himself.

*‘Once they stop Herakel, we will catch him and take him to the Battle God.’*

Then, at that moment...

Thud–

Rox looked confused. Why? The ground shook and trembled as if they had been hit by an earthquake. The sudden vibration that spread from their feet even broke out among the Heavenly Army.

Thud–

The commotion grew louder as the shaking and vibrations grew shorter and more intense.

Thud, thud, thud–!

*‘It feels like it’s getting closer?’*

The source of the vibrations, which felt like it started from a distance, was approaching them at a tremendous speed. Rox, whose vision was several times better than a human’s own vision, could catch sight of the source of the vibrations.

*‘God?’*

Rox was left shocked when he saw a topless, muscular man running at them at full speed.

*‘Shit. You’re telling me that these vibrations are caused by running?’*

He immediately understood that the man was no ordinary god.

*‘Is he one of the Six Monster Gods?’*

Rox felt like he was facing one of the objects of fear, even for the gods.

It did not take Herakel too long to reach their vicinity. The Heavenly Army looked terrified as they stared at the muscular god, while Rox was left flustered. However, Herakel, who had been running like crazy just a few moments earlier, stopped right before their defense line.

*“Haa... Haa... Gaerna’s Life Elixir. Need. Haaa... Haaa... I need...”*

But then...

Boom!

An arrow shot straight toward Herakel's chest. It was an arrow shot by the frightened Rox to get the upper hand for the battle to come. The Heavenly Captains were well-versed in all weapons. That was why he was pretty confident with this shot. However, something very shocking happened.

Ping—!

The arrow that shot straight toward Herakel's chest fell feebly on the ground as if it had hit iron. Then, Herakel grabbed his club when the arrow made contact with his chest.

“This— This monster...!” Rox was appalled.

Rox's arrow might not reach the level of the God of Archery, but there was no denying the tremendous penetrative force hidden within that shot. The problem was that it did not even scratch Herakel's skin.

“Me... Gaerna's Life...”

“Push him back! We have to stop him somehow! We must not let a monster like that enter the Land of the Gods!”

The Heavenly Soldiers sent thousands of arrows and magical attacks toward Herakel. When the thick cloud of dust, which was kicked up by the countless explosions, settled down, Herakel's face had grown ugly, and his hold on his club had tightened. The shocked Rox looked at Herakel with wide eyes as he took one strong and mighty step forward.

Thuuuuuud—

Then, Herakel started to run fiercely and swing his club at the soldiers of the Iron Shield.

*‘It's just a club...!’* But Rox was unable to finish the thought in his head.

Boom!!!

When Herakel's club collided with the defense line, a loud sound echoed, and several shield soldiers were sent flying away.

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

“Uwaaaaaaack!”

And just like an angry bull, Herakel began to swing his club like crazy. Shockingly enough, every swing of Herakel's club would send dozens of Heavenly Soldiers flying away. A single attack had left them all incapacitated, unable to fight with their bones broken.

“Eight times. Endure... me, club eight times. Rocado... Me, tell you where.”

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—!

Rox was left stunned by the unimaginable display of force before him. This was the first time that he had seen someone like this. Everyone felt like thousands of tons of weight were striking them with every swing of his club while their opponent remained unscathed with his skin that looked harder than a dragon's scale.

*‘What the hell is he talking about? What will he tell us if we endure eight of his hits?’*



Herakel had been spewing strange words with every swing of his club. But Rox ignored his words and shot forward. He slashed Herakel's chest with his sword.

Spurt—!

The slash was shallow. However, blood spurted out from Herakel's chest. At that moment, Herakel, gritting his teeth, looked at Rox indifferently and spoke nonchalantly, "My club. Endure eight times."

"...?"

Thud—

Rox was confident he would not lag behind any gods regarding combat techniques. But when that club swung and made contact with him, he felt his life flash before his eyes with how heavy the impact was.

"Keheoook?!"

Thud—

"Ahaaaaack!"

The impact from the club easily tore apart the full plate armor covering Rox's body.

"Three. Four."

Thud—!

Thud—!

Rox could not return to his senses. He felt like he would die if he continued to get beaten up. Only at this moment did he realize that the power and strength that Herakel's possessed was hefty and could almost be considered out of this world.

"S- Stoooooop!"

Herakel stopped when he heard Rox's roar. He just left behind Rox sprawled on the ground like that and pounced on the Heavenly Soldiers coming his way. After knocking them all out, he caused the ground to shake and vibrate as he ran again.

"Haa... Haa..."

Rox finally returned to his senses and realized that the situation was far worse than he had thought it to be.

*'Are you saying that a monster like that is coming to the Land of the Gods?'*

If that were indeed the case, then it would be a disaster.

"Report the current status and the damages received."

"35,000 soldiers are suffering from broken bones and five with serious injuries. There are no deaths."

Rox frowned when he heard the report. *'We've been hit and beaten by a club so severely, yet there are no deaths?'*

*Maybe we're lucky?* This thought flashed in Rox's mind as he gave his orders. "Report to the Battle God. The entire Heavenly Army is now in a state of emergency! Summon all of the Heavenly Captains!"

"Yes, sir!"

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The gods knelt in front of the Battle God and gave their reports.

"Battle God, Herakel is going on a rampage."

"More than tens of thousands of our Heavenly Soldiers, including Heavenly Captain Rox, had been injured."

"As of now, Herakel is said to be heading toward this place."

"Please give an immediate judgment and give us your orders."

"If we delay any further, we will receive more damage."

The Battle God looked solemnly at the reporting gods. He had sent Rox upon hearing the report of the God of Alcohol. But it seemed like it was still not enough.

When the Battle God hesitated, one of the gods asked, "Why are you hesitating, Battle God? That bastard is threatening the peace of the Land of the Gods and is going on a rampage for no reason at all!"

The Battle God had heard many stories about Herakel. Herakel was the only one who knew where Rocado was. Because of that, many gods sought him out. However, they were all beaten like dogs and kicked out without gaining anything. They even called him "Mad Dog" because he would go crazy and beat the gods with his club. Even so, the Battle God had never ordered to kill Herakel.

*'This is because they were the ones who went to find him themselves. They are only paying the price for what they have done.'*

Also, none of the gods who had been beaten by Herakel had died. But now, the situation has changed. It was not just one or two gods but more than tens of thousands of Heavenly Soldiers who had suffered from Herakel. If they did not stop him now, then hundreds of thousands might suffer injuries.

But did he have to go out to deal with this matter? The situation was far too trivial for the Battle God, who was swamped with work, to come out personally. If all of the Heavenly Captains move, then it was likely possible for them to deal with the situation. The most important thing here was to kill Herakel quickly and minimize the damage they would receive.

*'I don't know the exact reason, but Herakel had caused huge damage to the Land of the Gods.'*

This fact would remain unchanged.

The Battle God managed almost everything in the Land of the Gods and was responsible for accepting or rejecting various tasks and orders daily.

As the one in charge, he ordered, "You have the permission to kill."

"We have received your order!"

"We have received your order!"

As the Battle God watched the gods retreat, he was reminded of Minhyuk.

*'If that guy plays an active role here, then he might be able to receive the support of many gods in the Land of the Gods.'*

So, he called for Minhyuk.

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All of the Heavenly Captains, except Rox, gathered in one place together with 100,000 elite troops of the Heavenly Army. They were all waiting for Herakel to come.

"The Battle God has given his command! We have permission to kill Herakel!"

"As soon as he enters our vision, unleash an attack on him!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Yes, sir!"

The difference between being allowed to kill and not being allowed to kill was immense. After all, if they had permission to kill, they could use all of their strength.

The First Heavenly Captain, Carrack, led the entire Heavenly Army and all of the other Heavenly Captains. Carrack, with his exceptional sight, caught sight of Herakel's figure. They did not even say anything to stop him or keep him in check.

"Kill Herakel and stop him from disturbing the Land of the Gods!"

Tens of thousands of arrows and magical attacks rained down upon Herakel's charging figure, creating explosions that caused a thick cloud of dust to rise. Meanwhile, the Heavenly Captains remained vigilant as they looked at Herakel. Then, at that moment, they saw Herakel leap to the skies.

Herakel slammed his club on the ground the moment he landed among the ranks of the soldiers of the Heavenly Army.

Crack—!

The ground shook and trembled as cracks appeared. Slamming the club on the ground caused such damage. It was a tremendous yet mysterious force, one that none of them had ever heard of or witnessed before.

*'As expected. That bastard has to die right here and now.'*

"All of the Heavenly Captains will come with me."

The elite of the Heavenly Army were rendered helpless, unable to keep up with Herakel's pace and tremendous force. They simply collapsed and fell without even putting up a fight.

The Third Heavenly Captain, skilled with the bow, sent arrows that stabbed deeply into Herakel's thick, sturdy skin. However, the attack did not stop Herakel at all.

"My club. Eight times...!" Herakel continued to shout strange words as he trampled on the soldiers of the Heavenly Army.

The Second Heavenly Captain moved as swift as lightning and cut Herakel down with the sword. The Second Heavenly Captain smirked when he saw the blood spurting out of Herakel's body. However, a flash of doubt appeared on his face when he felt Herakel's hand grab him by the back. The action broke his balance and forced him to fall backward.

Bang—!

What the fallen Heavenly Captain saw right in front of his eyes was none other than a club.

"Eight times! Endure!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Second Heavenly Captain's bones breaking rang loudly with every hit. The soldiers of the Heavenly Army did not dare to come close after hearing the gut-wrenching screams of the Second Heavenly Captain echoing on the battlefield.

By the fourth hit, the Second Heavenly Captain shouted, "Please stop! Sp— Spare me!"

In the end, the Second Heavenly Captain could only endure five hits. The moment Herakel threw the Second Heavenly Captain away, the Third Heavenly Captain rushed forward and stabbed him with his spear on his abdomen.

Stab—!

The Third Heavenly Captain pulled out his spear and stabbed him dozens of times. "Enough! Die!"

"Rocado... Gaerna's Life Elixir... Need..." Herakel said, his words sounding nonsensical to the ears of everyone present. However, despite his body being riddled with holes and bleeding all over, he just grabbed the spear that was stuck on the right of his chest and snapped it with his overwhelming strength.

Snap—!

Then, he beat the enemy in front of him once more. This time, the Heavenly Captain could only endure four times.

"I- I understand! Stop!"

Carrack could only watch as the monster overwhelmed them. Even the Heavenly Soldiers could no longer reach him.

*'Is- Is he really a monster?'*

Right now, Herakel looked utterly hideous. He had dozens of arrows stuck in his body, and his skin was charred black by the explosion caused by the magical attacks that rained down on him. But it

wasn't just that. Blood was dripping down his body, which was riddled with holes, while a broken spear was lodged on the right side of his chest.

The Fourth Heavenly Captain struck Herakel's head with an iron mace.

Bang!

Herakel, who received the heavy blow, staggered on his feet. While the reeling Herakel tried to correct his balance, the Fourth Heavenly Captain took the opportunity to hit him with his iron mace.

"Please, I beg you. Just die!"

Slam! Slam! Slam!

Despite the blood covering his entire body, Herakel remained standing. He quickly caught the Fourth Heavenly Captain's iron mace and started to beat him with his club.

"Keuaaack! Aaack! Aaaaaaaaaaack!" The Fourth Heavenly Captain's screams echoed loudly on the battlefield.

Seeing this, the other Heavenly Captains could not help but step back.

*'What the hell...'*

Herakel was already teetering on the edge of life and death. It wouldn't be strange if he died right away. Everyone looking at him felt like they were looking at something grotesque, especially with his head almost broken and bleeding non-stop.

Thud, thud—!

The First Heavenly Captain gathered his courage and attacked the bleeding Herakel. He swung his sword and cut through Herakel's body dozens of times. Even the Heavenly Soldiers mustered all the courage left in their bodies as they raised their spears, shot their arrows, and bombarded him with their magic.

But the reeling Herakel continued to stand. Ultimately, he grabbed the First Heavenly Captain by the neck and said, "Me... did... nothing..."

"...?"

"Me only need Gaerna's Life Elixir."

"What..."

"You... first... attacked..."

But the terrified Carrack could no longer hear or understand the words that he was saying.

"U- Uwaaaaaaaaaack!"

Herakel's club slammed straight into the head of the screaming First Heavenly Captain.

Thud!

Herakel chased after the reeling Carrack and hit him with his club again.

Thud!

“N- No...!”

“Sir Carrack!”

Herakel’s strength was far too unexpected. It even exceeded the Battle God’s expectations. Or was it only because he was already going berserk because he was already on the brink of death? Was this why he was given the moniker of “Crazy Dog”?

Herakel raised his club toward the fallen Carrack. “Eight times. Endure.”

Vwoooooooong–

Carrack closed his eyes when he saw the whizzing club toward him.

Thud–

The dull sound of the club hitting something rang loudly. However, Carrack could tell that he could not reach his damage.

*‘Did he miss?’*

It was not impossible. After all, he was already on the brink of death. But what was that terrible sound that rang in his ears?

When Carrack opened his eyes, he saw a man wearing a silver full-plate armor with a cape carrying the symbol of a fork and knife crossed together, standing with his back to him. The man faced Herakel, his blood flowing down from the club that directly hit him on the head.

“Ba- Battle God?”

It was none other than the next generation of Battle God, Minhyuk. He looked at Herakel and said, “That eight times, I will endure it.”

Chapter 993

Special Players Management Team.

President Kang Taehoon, along with the team members, all stared at the monitor. They saw the blood dripping down Minhyuk’s head after he received Herakel’s attack in Carrack’s place.

“How’s Herakel?”

“Looking at his HP, he will probably die if Player Minhyuk began to attack him right there and then.”

“Hmm...” President Kang Taehoon groaned.

Herakel was the one closest to Rocado. However, Herakel was also the one with the most straightforward and purest soul among all the gods.

“If Herakel dies here, no player can find a clue about Rocado’s whereabouts. Then, everything will just disappear.”

Indeed, it was just as Kang Taehoon said. Only Herakel knew the way to reach Rocado. If Minhyuk killed Herakel here, then that method would disappear. And Rocado was not a god. He would soon die.

*'This is his final opportunity.'*

This was Minhyuk's last chance to meet Rocado.

At that moment, Lee Minhwa said, "But don't you think it's a bit weird?"

President Kang and Team Leader Park turned to look at Lee Minhwa with doubts on their faces.

"I'm talking about Player Minhyuk. I don't understand why he allowed the attack to land on him."

"...?"

"...?"

Both Taehoon and Minggyu looked like they finally realized what Minhwa was trying to say. It was true. It would have been more efficient for Player Minhyuk to attack Herakel than to allow the gigantic man to attack him. But Minhyuk willingly allowed him to land an attack on his head.

"And he even said that he would endure all eight of his attacks."

Player Minhyuk did not need to endure eight of Herakel's attacks. But Player Minhyuk said that he would receive the attacks himself.

The puzzled Lee Minhwa made an assumption and said, "None of the gods or the Heavenly Captains have endured more than five of Herakel's attacks. Do you think Player Minhyuk is trying to show off his strength to the other gods by enduring more than five of Herakel's attacks?"

The assumption sounded credible. However, none of them knew if that was the correct answer.

*'Player Minhyuk will use that method to get the recognition of the gods?'*

*'But the things that he would obtain from the gods would not be too big even if he got beaten up in front of them, no? Even if it were Player Minhyuk, he would be forced to log out if he tried to endure eight of those attacks,'* President Kang Taehoon thought while he looked at the monitor.

*'I don't know what he's trying to do or how he would solve this situation.'*

From what President Kang could see, the only outcome for Herakel was *death*. After all, in the Battle God had already given his judgment and had given the order to kill.

*'We have to see how things will go.'* President Kang Taehoon stared at the monitor.

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"Ba- Battle God!"

A commotion broke out among Carrack and the rest of the soldiers of the Heavenly Army. This was because the next generation Battle God allowed Herakel's attack to land on his head on behalf of Carrack.

Minhyuk, who appeared in the middle of the battlefield, had been watching the situation before.

"Eight times. You, endure?" Herakel gasped as he looked at Minhyuk.

The God of Magic, the God of Shields, the God of Archery, and several other gods began to appear. They immediately rushed to the battlefield after hearing that Herakel was more ferocious and vicious than they had heard and that the next generation Battle God, Minhyuk, would participate in the battle himself. However, they could not help but be confused with the scene before them.

"That's right. I'll endure it. There's seven left."

That was what Minhyuk said when he blocked Herakel's path.

But from what the Heavenly Captains and the newly arrived gods could see, Minhyuk could easily kill Herakel with his power alone. That was why they could not understand why he said that he would willingly allow the god to attack him seven more times.

"Battle God, if we launch a full-scale attack now, then..."

"All of you, back down."

Carrack and the other gods looked doubtfully at Minhyuk when they heard the threat in his voice.

The God of Archery, watching everything from a distance, raised his eyebrows. "Is he trying to show off his strength by enduring all of Herakel's beatings, something that no one has ever done before?"

The God of Shields looked at the scene in interest. "That would prove it. But has he never thought of losing?"

He might be able to prove his strength, but he would also show others how he got beaten up by Herakel.

"It seems like the next generation Battle God is much more reckless than we thought." The God of Shields clicked his tongue.

There was no way that Minhyuk could win the hearts of the gods of the Land of the Gods with that method. However, Minhyuk was firm in his decision.

"Endure eight. After enduring... hit me eight times. If you knock me down, Rocado. Me, tell you where." Herakel grabbed his club tightly and swung at Minhyuk with all his strength.

Thud—!

A loud sound rang with one swing of Herakel's club. Minhyuk, who received the attack, was pushed back significantly.

[Your HP has fallen below 75%.]

[The impact from the attack has left you in a daze.]



[You will feel light-headed.]

When the club hit him, Minhyuk felt like all of his bones were about to break. The worst part? The attack on his head reduced his HP by 15%.

Of course, the damage was significant because Minhyuk was hit in the head. However, the most critical factor was that this was Herakel's "basic attack." However, one had to know that he received the second attack while still wearing the Transcendental's Armor, which is defensive equipment with tremendous defensive power. The portion of the Transcendental's Armor that received the second attack was dented, broken, and hollowed out.

"Three."

*Boom!!!*

Minhyuk could no longer withstand the next swing of Herakel's club. The attack had sent him flying away.

[Your HP has fallen below 66%.]

[The bones in your right arm have been fractured. Movement will be difficult.]

"Kghhk!"

"Battle God!"

"As expected, we have to...!"

"No matter what happens, don't move!"

Carrack tried to order the other Heavenly Captains to attack, but Minhyuk stopped them once again. Carrack, the other Heavenly Captains, and the soldiers of the Heavenly Army truly could not understand what was going on, and they were also surprised.

*'He received three hits, but he's still standing?'*

*'That's crazy. The other Heavenly Captains all fell on the ground screaming by the third hit.'*

*'And that's not all; they had all turned dizzy while they screamed in pain.'*

Was this the person who would inherit the throne of the Battle God?

The Second Heavenly Captain, who had recovered after some time and was being supported by one of the soldiers of the Heavenly Army, looked at Carrack and said, "No one will be able to handle that from the fifth hit. By then, all of the bones in his body would be broken. But that's not the problem; gut-wrenching pain would wrap around his body. And the worst part, the eight hits that Herakel was talking about? It does not include any of his special skills and attributes."

"Hmm..." Carrack groaned.

The Second Heavenly Captain looked at them in confusion. "But the next generation Battle God... Doesn't he have skills that allow him to ignore skills, attacks, or any other force do any damage to him for five seconds?"

He was referring to Minhyuk's "Absolute Defense." If he activated that power, the conditions for it to be triggered would be met once Herakel attacked him.

*'I have no idea what he's thinking.'*

Then, Herakel's club landed on Minhyuk's shoulder.

"Four."

"Kghhk!"

Minhyuk's feet dug deeper into the ground that he was standing on. One look and anyone could tell that the bones on his shoulder were broken. Not only that, his HP has fallen below 50%.

*'Fortunately, the total volume of my HP has increased greatly after eating the Oppression's Beef Grilling Set.'*

Minhyuk received a significant boost in his stats and HP after he ate the Oppression's Beef Grilling Set. His HP would have fallen below 35% if it hadn't been for that.

At that moment, they saw Herakel tighten his grip on his club.

*'From now on, it's the real deal.'*

Cold sweat started to drip down Minhyuk's back.

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Herakel was in a hurry.

*'Gaerna's Life Elixir... Rocado... Must save...'*

That was why he went out into the world for the first time in his life. Herakel just needed help. But the person who handed over a bottle to him stopped him because of his greed. It was as if that person did not care whether Rocado died or not as long as he got what he needed.

So, Herakel beat him up just like *she* said. Then, he ran—to save Rocado. At that moment, unknown people appeared and blocked his path. Herakel ran toward them while thinking, *'Help. Help Rocado.'*

Herakel was just running, but they shot him in the chest with an arrow. But that was only the beginning. They even sent thousands of arrows and magical attacks at him.

*'If they hit me, then... Herakel should not put up with it. Rocado said, Herakel protect myself.'*

So, Herakel did not endure and fought back. He did not have much time and had to rush, yet they hurt him for no reason at all.

He knocked down everyone blocking his path and continued to run. But others appeared to block his path again. This time, powerful gods joined the fray to stop him. He told them.

Gaerna's Life Elixir.

Rocado.

He was crying out to them to save Rocado. But no one listened to Herakel. All they did was try to kill him. Herakel knew that he did not have much time left to dilly-dally. He had to get his hands on the life elixir somehow and save *him*. That was why he fought with everything that he had. Herakel knew that he was lacking when it came to his brain. The only thing that he had was his sturdy body. So, he fought with this strong and sturdy body of his.

His head was throbbing from being hit by the iron mace. The arrows lodged deeply all over his body were tormenting him. He even felt like he was going to topple over from the spear that was stabbed deeply in his chest. But he had to continue forward.

*'Help... Need...'*

But they continued to attack Herakel for no reason.

Then, a strange man appeared in front of Herakel. He said that he would endure all eight of Herakel's attacks. Until this moment, no one in the entire world could endure more than five of Herakel's attacks.

Thud—! Thud—! Thud—!

Even though the man stumbled on his feet, was sent flying back, or received a huge shock, he did not fall.

*'Go away! No time!'*

But the man was able to hold on and endure his fifth hit. Herakel was shocked. But he did not have any time to think. He just held his club tightly and hit the man on the leg.

Thud—!

Herakel sighed in relief when he saw the man collapse after he hit him on the leg. But just as he was about to move forward, the man stood up again.

"There's only two left," the man said as he munched on the chocolate bar he pulled out from his pockets. Then, the injuries on his body began to recover.

Two more.

Herakel gritted his teeth.

Please, go away. Me, need help! Me, need someone to listen! Me, don't want others attacking without reason!

Herakel grabbed his club with both hands. Then, he swung it at the man with all of his strength.

Boom—!

The man was sent flying back. He landed among the Heavenly Army on standby. At this moment, Herakel thought that he would finally be able to move forward again, so he gathered his strength in his legs.

"*Urk*. One more." The man gasped as he stumbled and struggled to return to his feet.

By now, Herakel was utterly startled. No one has ever been able to endure seven of his attacks.

Herakel clearly remembered what *she* said to him. He could even remember the laughter lacing her voice.

*–Herakel, what should you do if someone can endure seven of your hits?*

*–Herakel will hit one more time! Herakel said to hit eight times!*

*—No, Herakel. If they can endure seven of your hits, then that means that they are terrifying and strong. If that happens, you have to run with all your might. Understand?*

*–Herakel will run after hitting seven times.*

Herakel turned around to run. But he stopped in his tracks. If he ran away, then what about the life elixir? Then, he wouldn't be able to get his hands on it.

Herakel's lips quivered. Just like *she* said, anyone who could endure seven of Herakel's hits was someone who could kill him.

Scared. So scared.

He was so scared of the man killing him after he survived his final attack. But even so, Herakel could not run. If he ran, then Rocado would die. In the end, Herakel chose to remain. Despite his lips quivering from the fear, Herakel still grabbed his club tightly and hit the man with all his might.

Boom—!

The man, who threw up blood, was sent flying back by the attack.

*Please, no stand.* Herakel prayed desperately. But the man, who looked like all of the bones in his body had been crushed, struggled to stand up. Then, he limped toward Herakel.

Herakel felt like his legs had become jelly when he saw the man walk toward him. He knew that he was going to die now.

“Herakel hit eight times. Herakel endures eight attacks,” Herakel declared, his club falling to the ground.

Herakel just wanted someone to help him. But everyone was the same. They all tried to kill him just because he was strong and his body was tough and sturdy.

“So, is it my turn now?” The man asked as he walked up to Herakel.

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Many gods, including the Battle God, had arrived at the field where Herakel was rampaging.

*‘Why did he let the attacks hit him?’*

This was because the Battle God had received an utterly ridiculous report. The report said that Minhyuk willingly allowed Herakel to hit him.

*‘He’s not stupid like that, though?’*

Then, the Battle God watched as Minhyuk, who looked like every bone in his body had been crushed, limped toward Herakel.

*'It seems like he truly deserves the name Mad Dog?'*

From what it looked like, Herakel was genuinely crazy enough to beat the gods. However, the Battle God had already brought judgment and ordered to kill Herakel. It seemed like Herakel finally realized this fact, as proven by his quivering lips.

“So, is it my turn now?”

The Battle God could not understand what Minhyuk was trying to do here as he watched the man walk toward Herakel.

Then, Minhyuk finally reached Herakel. He looked up at the two-meter-tall man, and just when the muscular god felt like it was finally his time to die... he hugged Herakel.

“...?!”

The Battle God's eyes grew wide from the shocking turn of events. Even the other gods and all of the members of the Heavenly Army were all in shock.

But something far more surprising happened. Herakel, who had been running around like a mad dog, fell and began crying and wailing, just like a child voicing his grievances.

“Me, scared! Herakel just wanted help. But... they attacked Herakel. No reason! They attacked Herakel! They said they kill me if Herakel didn't tell them. Rocado, where!”

Minhyuk gently hugged and shook Herakel, who was crying. He even patted him on the back to console him. And with a very warm and gentle voice, he said, “Let's do it one by one, okay? Can you tell me what's going on first?”

Chapter 994

Minhyuk had been together with Conir, a boy with intellectual disability, for a very long time now. Thus, he learned much about people with intellectual disabilities from his daily interactions with Conir.

People like Conir would blindly follow the words of those who protected and cared for them. They would also unconditionally follow the teachings that had been repeatedly told and ingrained in them.

*'What would have happened if I had not endured Herakel's eight hits and embraced him?'*

If Minhyuk had hugged the tense and unbridled Herakel just like that, he would have been sent flying back by the gigantic man's club. Minhyuk had arrived earlier on the battlefield and had been observing the situation.

*'There are no deaths.'*

The strength in Herakel's club was hefty. It was to the point that a few of the Heavenly Soldiers could die with just one or two hits from him. But Herakel had been skillfully controlling his strength, distinguishing between those who could and could not endure the hits of his clubs. Because of that, none of them had died.

When he saw that, Minhyuk embraced Herakel instead of killing him. What he needed to do now was to comfort and console Herakel and listen to his story, something that no one ever listened to.

Minhyuk patted Herakel's back gently. And Herakel, acting like a mad dog, broke down and wept like a child. Herakel immediately began talking when Minhyuk asked him to tell him what was happening.

Herakel told Minhyuk about how Rocado, his long-time friend, was on the verge of death. He also told him how he came out of his cave for the first time to seek help and how he encountered the God of Alcohol. Then, the following stories were something that he had already heard or witnessed.

"I see. So that's what happened." A bitter taste lingered in Minhyuk's mouth.

As he patted Herakel on the back, he saw the Heavenly Captains, who had recovered considerably from their injuries, pointing their weapons at Herakel and approaching them. It seemed like they were under the illusion that Minhyuk had created this situation so it would be easier for them to subdue Herakel.

Witnessing this, Minhyuk released an overwhelming killing intent. Minhyuk's CHA was extremely high compared to the other gods, and the Battle God's dignity made everyone feel numb.

"I will kill you if you try to attack."

"...!"

"...!"

The Heavenly Captains all stopped and took a step back when Minhyuk's killing intent washed over him. At the same time, they all looked at him in confusion.

First Heavenly Captain Carrack said, "The Battle God has permitted us to kill Mad Dog Herakel. The damage that the Land of the Gods received is already far too much. Have you not seen Herakel's power? If we let him live, he will definitely threaten the Land of the Gods."

Everyone could not understand what Minhyuk was doing. This was more so because the influence of the next generation and the current generation Battle Gods was far too different. The current Battle God had personally given the authority to kill Herakel. There was no questioning that.

Minhyuk slowly let go of the crying Herakel. He looked around him and said, "Mad Dog?"

He found their words ridiculously absurd.

"When the gods came to find him to find out where Rocado is, did he swing his club for no reason?" He asked as he walked among the Heavenly Soldiers. "No. That shouldn't be the case, right? They must have asked Herakel, 'Where is Rocado?' And Herakel would not have answered any of you."

Minhyuk took one step after another and approached someone. This someone was the Battle God, the greatest and highest god of the current era.

"Since he did not answer, all of you must have used all kinds of things to bribe him. But that one must have failed, too. So, you resorted to threatening him. You must have told him, 'I will kill Rocado!' or 'I will kill you, you bastard!', no?"

Minhyuk stood in front of the Battle God.

“Only at that point did the beatings start. After that, you told the world that he is a Mad Dog. The gods, who had talked big and bragged that they would get Rocado’s location, would have exaggerated when they returned after being beaten and driven away by Herakel. *‘That bastard is a mad dog who beat me for no reason at all.’* You probably said that.”

“Your words are an attack on the other gods!”

“You should watch your mouth!”

The Heavenly Captains criticized Minhyuk, while the gods, who came to see the situation, looked at him with ugly faces.

However, Minhyuk’s sharp gaze turned to look at the God of Alcohol. “Did I say anything wrong?”

“...”

Edona gulped, his mouth turning dry from the question. He had heard from Herakel that *Rocado was in danger*. However, he was far too intoxicated with his greed that he still wanted Rocado to make him his goblet, even if he was on the brink of death.

*‘Even if he’s dying, he has to make me a goblet before he dies!’* With this thought in mind, Edona put pressure on Herakel and even threatened the man. However, the report that Edona told the Battle God was completely different from what happened.

*‘Mad Dog Herakel beat me up for no reason at all! He’s now running towards the Land of the God! He is a threat to us all.’* This was what he reported.

Among the gods existed a God of Truth. With the power of the God of Truth, they could always confirm whether Edona’s report was accurate. Knowing this, Edona immediately kowtowed in front of the Battle God and said, “For– Forgive me! Forgive me, Battle God.”

Then, Minhyuk caught sight of the Fifth Heavenly Captain Rox standing among the other Heavenly Captains. He looked at the man and asked, “Did he attack you first?”

“...”

Rox could not answer. This was because he was the one who shot the arrow first after being frightened by Herakel’s thunderous stomps.

“No.”

The truth was finally revealed to everyone present.

“In the first place, the ones who created this so-called Mad Dog are those petty and narrow-minded gods.”

The gods were noble beings. They were arrogant beings who would never admit to making a mistake, even if they did something wrong.

Then, one of the gods said, “Are you going to go against the will of the current Battle God?”

Hearing the words of that god, Minhyuk, who was already standing in front of the Battle God, said, "If being the Battle God means that I will be like this, then I will refuse this position."

"...!"

The Battle God frowned. He and Minhyuk had a very close relationship. He even allowed Minhyuk to call him *uncle*. Would he do something like this? But Minhyuk was a very stubborn person. He would do what he said.

The Battle God looked around at the Heavenly Army and the gods watching the scene. At this moment, he clearly remembered the words that he had uttered before.

*'We are old. We need someone new to lead us.'*

The Battle God knew that if he had cared to learn more about Herakel, then he would have been able to learn about all of the things that Minhyuk revealed here.

But just because he was the Battle God did not mean he would always be able to choose the right path. Just as a king would ask for the opinions of his vassals, the Battle God would also ask the opinion of the other gods. This was so he could arrive at the most appropriate decision.

Then, the Battle God said, "Heed my orders. Herakel will be exiled from the Land of the Gods forever. He has to leave the Land of the Gods within two weeks. If Herakel ever steps foot inside the Land of the Gods, he will be met with immediate judgment and be killed."

The Battle God looked at his men and continued, "And God of Alcohol Edona will be sentenced to ten years in prison for giving false reports."

After leaving those words, the Battle God turned around and left. As he walked further away, the God of Cooking appeared beside him in a flash of light. She said, "You took a hit and lost the argument, huh?"

However, there was a slight smile on the Battle God's face. The God of Cooking immediately understood the meaning of that smile and chuckled in response.

"We are completely different gods."

"That's right. I think he will open up a new world."

And Minhyuk? He felt relieved when he saw the Battle God and the other gods turn around and leave.

*'I was so nervous back there...'*

Minhyuk had confidently said he would not become the Battle God if the man were like that. However, Minhyuk was only able to say that because he knew better than anybody else that the current Battle God was not some kind of scoundrel who would not listen to reason.

But first things first. He had to take Herakel away from this place. Just when the thought flashed in his head, Minhyuk saw Herakel, crying like a child, stand up and clutch his hand tightly with his huge hand. Herakel treated Minhyuk as if he were his guardian, crouching to hide behind him and looking up at him with pure and innocent eyes while tightening his grip on Minhyuk's hand.

"Herakel."



Crack, crack, crack—

“My hand is breaking...”

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Minhyuk brought Herakel far from where he had fought a fierce battle earlier. Then, he said, “Herakel, there’s no more Gaerna’s Life Elixir left.”

“...?!” Herakel’s eyes grew wide as he looked at Minhyuk in shock.

Unfortunately, all of Gaernae’s Life Elixir in Minhyuk’s possession had been used up. One had been used for the Battle God, while the other was used for Don.

Seeing the sad look on Herakel’s face, Minhyuk said, “But maybe we can find a way.”

Minhyuk was wondering about something. Wasn’t Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado a god? If he was a god, then he should not die unless he received physical harm, no?

“Why is a god like Rocado going to die?”

“...Rocado. No god. Rocado, human.”

“...?”

Minhyuk could not help but be surprised that one of the Eight Pillars of the world was a human.

*‘How on earth did he do that?’*

The stories that Minhyuk had heard about Rocado made him believe that he had been in this world for a long time. It would be bizarre for a human to live that long, wouldn’t it?

“Rocado... Immortality Herb, ate. Rocado ate five Immortality Herbs. No more herbs left.”

After hearing Herakel’s words, Minhyuk was able to infer the situation. He assumed that the herb *Immortality Herb* was an item that could greatly increase the lifespan of a human like Rocado.

*‘That’s crazy.’*

For a moment, Minhyuk wondered what happened to Rocado, who lived longer than the average human, before he became the Jack of all trades.

However, the most important was whether Herakel would allow Minhyuk to meet Rocado.

*‘Looking at the current situation, I don’t think there’s something to worry about, but...’*

Herakel had been walking majestically while holding Minhyuk in one hand like a newborn baby. Minhyuk could not understand why he was hugged like this either or where they were going.

“Herakel’s friend. They said, welcome anytime. Go home.”

The situation was quite favorable to Minhyuk.

Minhyuk, who was being held comfortably(?) in Herakel’s arm, suddenly thought of a question. *‘If Herakel’s club is an ordinary club, it would have already been broken to pieces long ago.’*

Although Herakel's club looked ordinary, it was nothing but that.

"Herakel, can you show me your club?"

"Of course! Herakel gives everything to friend!"

- STR increases by 45%.

- STM increases by 65%.

- Passive Skill: Slightly Painful Club.

- Passive Skill: Really Painful Club.

- Passive Skill: Very Painful Club.

- Passive Skill: Really Fast Club.

- Active Skill: Really Very Painful Club.

"...?"

Minhyuk's eyes grew wide as a saucer. *'The attack power is over 2,000?!'*

The Sword of Aeon, a sword that was hailed as the most incredible sword in the world, only had around 2,300 attack power. Of course, it had been quite a long time since Minhyuk obtained the Sword of Aeon, so there must have been many artifacts with 2,000 attack power released to the world.

If there was one, it was probably already in Alexander's hands. However, just because artifacts with that much attack power had been released did not mean they were commonplace. That was why it shocked Minhyuk to see the club have that much attack power.

And that was not all. It could also increase Herakel's STR by 45% and STM by 65%.

*'Is this why the gods could not endure his attacks?'*

But the more shocking part is that it said that Herakel could freely turn his passive skills on or off.

*'Wait, what's wrong with these skill names?'*

Of course, the skill names might have been written as such because the club was customized for Herakel.

*'Hmm. It really is made for Herakel.'*

It was made so it was easy for Herakel to understand. These were the descriptions of the passive skills:

The Slightly Painful Club had a 50% chance of getting triggered and could give 10% additional damage.

The Really Painful Club had a 40% chance of being triggered and could deal 20% additional damage.

The Very Painful Club had a 20% chance of being triggered and could deal 25% additional damage.

The Really Fast Club had a 20% chance of getting triggered and could double the speed of Herakel's club.

*'I think I would have died if I got hit with the club's passive...?'*

Minhyuk's HP had dropped to 5% by the eighth hit of Herakel's club. He would have died and come back to life if the passive was turned on.

But there was one thing that Minhyuk found to be truly ridiculous. *'This is just a rare item?'*

It said, "The one who received Rocado's permission." This meant that as long as someone received Rocado's permission, they could wield this club even if they were only at Level 10.

*'Our levels restrict the artifacts that we can equip.'*

Legendary-rank artifacts that players at Level 100 could own were far worse than the legendary-rank artifacts owned by players at Level 500. However, if these artifacts suited the player, they could display great power among players at the same level. Athenae had used the *requirements* to cleverly restrict the artifacts players could wear according to their levels.

However, looking at the club's requirements alone, one would think it was only suitable for players up to Level 50, mainly because it was ranked *rare*. But if one looked at its abilities, one would doubt whether it was only at that level. That was why Minhyuk found it to be truly ridiculous.

But the answer came easily to him.

"...Herakel."

"Why?"

"The +43 written next to Herakel's club is a sign of the club being reinforced, right?"

"That's right! Rocado gathered the twinkling and sparkling stones and used them!"

"...?"

Minhyuk was shocked. At this moment, he realized why Rocado was hailed as Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado.

*'This is enough to destroy an entire ecosystem, right?'*

Of course, the chances of successful reinforcement would increase significantly if someone at a high level used an excellent reinforcement stone to strengthen a low-rank artifact. Because of that, some spendthrift and rich players often reinforce their training swords to +20 for fun.

However, the fact that the club was ranked rare meant it was not ranked that low.

*‘But he was still able to strengthen it by +40?’*

Perhaps this was only possible because it was Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado who did it.

At this moment, Minhyuk recalled several artifacts that he could not reinforce and strengthen even if they were still at +0. These artifacts were none other than the Transcendental’s Armor Set and the Sword of Aeon.

Then, Herakel giggled. “Friend! Friend wants to strengthen something?!”

Herakel was showing off, just like any ordinary man.

“Yes, I want to strengthen something.”

“Herakel! If Herakel’s friend helps Rocado not be hurt anymore, Herakel will help you strengthen it!”

It was like he was saying, “Hey, hey! He will do it as long as I say it~” Of course, there was a condition. And that condition was to help Rocado.

“Really? Will Rocado do it if you say so?”

“Rocado will do it if Herakel says it!” Herakel confidently thumped his chest with his fist.

“I also want to eat something delicious.”

“Hehe. Trust Herakel! Rocado will do it if Herakel says so! Herakel knows that Rocado has some strange ingredients!”

“Let’s go, Herakel! Let’s meet Rocado!”

After a while.

Herakel was on his knees with his fists raised high to the sky.

“Keep your arms straight!”

Herakel cried silently, tears dripping down his cheeks after hearing Rocado’s shout.

“Herakel... wrong...”

This was the ending of the show-off and the braggart.

Chapter 995

Rocado, one of the Eight Pillars of the world and the only human among them, looked like an ordinary middle-aged man at first glance. However, his pale complexion showed that he was in poor health.

He looked at Herakel, who was crying like a child, with tears and snot dripping down his chin, and he looked fierce.

*‘What should I do if something happens to you?’*

Herakel ran non-stop when he saw Rocado vomit a mouthful of blood. And what happened when he came back?

*–Herakel made a friend! Strengthen Herakel's friend's artifact and give him rare ingredients! Herakel said that Rocado would do everything for Herakel!*

This was what Herakel said. Herakel's bragging was more like a child stubbornly insisting on something. It was pretty cute, considering the circumstances. However, there was something that Rocado was quite shocked about.

“So? Who is your friend? And where is he now?”

Rocado just could not understand. Herakel's power was far too frightening. Not just ordinary people, even the gods were scared by it.

*‘Of course, no one could stop him once he set his mind to it.’*

This was also why Herakel did not say much in the cave after he declared that he would protect Rocado. After all, Rocado would stop him from going out of the cave. But even if Rocado hugged him by the waist and tried to stop him, Herakel would just drag him out with him while saying, “*Herakel, go!*” So, who would dare to befriend Herakel, who acted like this?

Herakel looked sad. “Gaerna’s Life Elixir... no more in the world. Herakel... In the end, Herakel can’t save you.”

Then, Herakel began to talk about what he had experienced outside. Rocado, who listened to his story, could not help but look at Herakel in shock. Herakel had put himself in danger and had almost died for his sake. However, Herakel's words after that made Rocado’s jaw drop.

*‘He endured eight of Herakel's hits?’*

He was in pure awe and admiration. Enduring eight of Herakel’s hits was a method that Eirin and Rocado had thought of together. The two believed that there was no one unless they were at the level of the Eight Pillars or an Absolute God, who could endure eight of Herakel’s hits. Why did they think of this method? This was so Herakel, who had a pure and innocent heart, would not be ignored and taken advantage of outside.

“Did he endure eight of your hits and attack you eight times?”

Herakel shook his head when he heard Rocado’s question. “No. Minhyuk, Herakel’s friend, did not attack. He hugged Herakel tightly!”

“...?”

Rocado’s pupils shook when he heard those words.

“He hugged you?”

“He hugged Herakel tight! He told Herakel that it was okay! He also stopped the other gods from attacking Herakel!”

Rocado was once again in awe. *‘Another person who understands Herakel...’*

Then, Rocado said, “Why are you only telling this to me now, Herakel?!”

“Because Rocado made Herakel kneel for no reason!”

There was a reason why Rocado was feeling panicked and urgent. *‘I’m going to die soon.’*

He was one of the Eight Pillars, hailed as the Jack-of-all-Trades. Because of that, he knew better than anybody else that his days were already numbered. However, before he closed his eyes, he felt a faint presence beside him. This was none other than Herakel. The pure yet strangely powerful Herakel had always been in his mind.

*‘Perhaps he would be able to take care of Herakel.’*

But at that moment...

[A challenger has entered the Cave of Restriction.]

“...”

Rocado was left stunned. He could tell that the man who entered the Cave of Restriction was the same man that Herakel said was his friend. Now, it has become a problem.

The Cave of Restriction was located deep inside the cave where Herakel used to stay. If they could pass through it, they could come to this place where Rocado lived. As for Herakel, he only needed to take a few steps, and Rocado would automatically bring him inside.

“Didn’t you tell your friend how dangerous the Cave of Restriction is?”

“Herakel said! But Herakel’s friend said that there was something that he wanted to get. Also, Rocado told Herakel!” Herakel giggled. “If Herakel made a friend, bring Herakel’s friend anytime. Rocado and Eirin will welcome Herakel and Herakel’s friend!”

“...”

Rocado felt his heart ache. That was right. They had told Herakel that once before. They told him he could bring his friend whenever he made one. By then, he and Eirin would welcome his friend warmly.

“Will Herakel see Eirin soon?! Herakel is so excited!”

Rocado felt his chest ache once more. Herakel believed that Eirin would return if he brought a friend over. But Eirin was already dead. In this world, only Herakel and Rocado were left behind. A bitter taste lingered in Rocado’s mouth.

Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado had created the Cave of Restriction so he could hide from the world. So, what was the Cave of Restriction?

*‘Even if one of the Eight Pillars came here, they couldn’t clear that cave.’*

The Cave of Restriction was not a place that could be cleared with sheer force alone. It could bring the most excruciating and unbearable pain to whoever was challenging it. It did not matter how powerful one was; it would be useless in that place.

There were times when the Cave of Restriction would take away one’s vision. There were times when it would take away one’s sleep. There were even times when it would take away one’s body.

Once someone entered that place, Rocado would no longer be able to take them out of that place.

*'I want to leave Herakel in his care.'*

But for him to be able to do that, that person has to come and see Rocado first.

“Herakel, what did you promise to him?”

“Herakel promised to strengthen his artifact!”

“As long as you bring him to me?”

“Y- Yeah!”

Rocado squinted at Herakel. But Herakel just rolled his eyes and looked elsewhere. He pretended as if he did not know what Rocado meant. Rocado could only sigh at this.

Rocado had created tens of thousands of items so far and was able to obtain the power *Hand of Almighty*. This was a skill that could be considered to be a Disaster Skill. Why? Because it had the power to strengthen an artifact once. *Any* artifact.

“What else did you promise?”

“He- Herakel’s friend likes eating. Herakel said that Herakel would give him Rocado’s rare ingredient.”

“No way. Are you talking about the Pillar Ingredient?”

Seeing Rocado narrow his eyes at him, Herakel shook his head and said, “He- Herakel’s friend just said that he wants rare ingredients.”

Rocado was the Father of Dexterity. This meant that he also possessed exceptional skills in farming. Not only did he have unique ingredients, but he also had the most outstanding ingredient in the world, the Pillar Ingredient. Fortunately, Herakel did not speak about the ingredient.

*'I have to raise his chances, even if it's just a bit.'*

Rocado knew Herakel’s friend couldn’t clear the Cave of Restriction. However, he still wanted to help him increase his chances even a little. So, he added some rewards for the Cave of Restrictions.

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Minhyuk, stuck(?) by Herakel’s side, entered the cave where Herakel used to live to get to where Rocado was. However, Herakel disappeared from his side when they entered the cave. Minhyuk was not too surprised by the sudden turn of events since he had already been informed by Herakel beforehand.

*'I must clear all the trials in this cave to get to Rocado.'*

He had to do it to strengthen his Sword of Aeon and Transcendental’s Armor.

*'Hoo... Rocado definitely has some rare ingredients in hand.'*

Aside from that, he wanted to ask if he could help him decorate and make Temple Evangel look more splendid and outstanding.

As he went inside, the notifications started ringing in his ears.

[You have entered the Cave of Restriction.]

[Inside the Cave of Restriction, one day would be stretched out into a year.]

[The Cave of Restriction will restrict and control your possessions. It will continue to do so until it has forced you to give up.]

[If you choose to give the trial up, you will be forced to log out.]

[You will be able to move on to the next trial of the Cave of Restriction only after reaching 50% achievement of the current trial.]

[If you want to continue taking the current restriction trial, you can choose not to go to the next trial right away.]

[The higher the achievement, the better the reward.]

Minhyuk nodded as the torches lining up the walls of the dark Cave of Restriction lit up one after another.

Crackle—

A single bed greeted Minhyuk after the entire cave was lit up. There was nothing else inside the cave except for this bed.

*‘One day stretches out into a year...’*

He could roughly understand what the trial wanted to do. During that year, the Cave of Restriction would restrict and control something within him or something he possessed and continue to annoy and bother him until he was forced to give up.

When Minhyuk wondered what the first trial would restrict, a notification rang.

[The master of the Cave of Restriction has added a reward.]

[If you can clear two of the Cave of Restriction’s trials, you can reinforce a chosen artifact once.]

[However, you will only be able to receive this reward if you reach 50% of the trials’ achievement and exit the Cave of Restriction safely.]

“Oh...?” Minhyuk was quite surprised. *‘This was what Herakel told me earlier, no?’*

That was right. Herakel confidently patted his chest and said, *“If Herakel said it, Rocado would definitely do it. Herakel will say it because you are Herakel’s friend!”* And now it has translated into one of the cave's rewards.

Minhyuk truly wanted it.

*‘But according to Herakel’s words, this is something I could get even if I don’t overcome these trials, right?’*

Herakel told him he would make it so Minhyuk’s artifact would be reinforced. Of course, Minhyuk could only think this way because he did not know that Herakel was just bluffing and bragging.

After a while...



[The first trial of restriction has begun.]

Minhyuk listened to the notification that continued to ring in his ears.

[The first restriction will be slumber.]

Slumber. It meant sleeping.

[You will not be able to sleep.]

[Instead of sleeping, you can do image training. Everything that you imagine during image training will become real.]

[Close your eyes and do image training to achieve harmony between your body and consciousness.]

Sleep was considered one of humans' most significant needs. Minhyuk's expression turned serious when he heard that he could not sleep.

*'In reality, the system will just make me feel sleepy. But it wouldn't be such a big deal since only a day would pass,'* Minhyuk thought as he sat on the bed.

He could not help but chuckle before he started doing his image training.

*'Fu- Fufufufufu.'*

This was what the explanation said.

[Everything that you imagine during image training will become real.]

In other words, whatever Minhyuk thought and imagined would become real. Of course, it would only apply to this place.

Minhyuk quickly closed his eyes and imagined something. *'Let's think of something simple first. Shall we try home-cooked meals?'*

He quickly imagined the scene. He came home one day with an empty and rumbling stomach, only to be greeted by a warm and delicious home-cooked meal. Although the dishes on the table were simple, they were the best combination of home-cooked meals. Kimchi *jjigae*, two fried eggs, fried Vienna sausages, and salty and savory seaweed.

The thoughts that formed in his head slowly became a reality in front of him.

*'Kghhk. This is real, right?'*

Minhyuk could see that all the food he imagined had now appeared. The first thing that he tried was the hot kimchi *jjigae*. He scooped a spoonful and took a sip.

"Kghhk!"

It was pretty hot and spicy, yet it was very refreshing. Then, he scooped a spoonful of steaming white rice and put it in his mouth. Afterward, he scooped another spoonful of the kimchi *jjigae*, which had equal proportions of pork and kimchi, and put it in his mouth. The kimchi, pork, and soup that had been boiled perfectly created a fantastic harmony of flavors in his mouth.

Next, he placed a fried egg on top of his rice and took a huge bite.

“Kghhk! This is amazing. So freaking amazing. This is not a restriction, right? I think this is something good!”

For Minhyuk, this trial was a perfect and happy one. Then, he turned his attention to the fried Vienna Sausage. He took one and dipped it in ketchup.

“Kyaaaaa!”

Then, he would use the crispy seaweed, the perfect side dish for home-cooked meals, and make wraps.

After finishing his first meal, Minhyuk continued.

*‘Since I had home-cooked meals before this, should I eat something sweet? Should we eat some whipped cream cake, tiramisu, and around twenty macarons for dessert?’*

Minhyuk closed his eyes and imagined what he wanted to eat. He screamed happily as the food materialized in front of him.

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The drowsiness that enveloped their bodies made their limbs feel heavy. Even their lids turned heavy, and they wanted to sleep.

Please, just for five minutes. I want to sleep.

This was the scariest part about the first restriction, *Slumber*. Everyone, including beasts and humans, needed to sleep to restore the energy they had spent while they were active during the day. Humans were considered to have the greatest need for sleep.

This was why Rocado believed that this trial was the hardest. Of course, he thought that it would be the same for the challenger who entered the Cave of Restriction this time.

However, the man was able to endure the trial for one, two, three, four, five days, a week, and two weeks and continue on safely. Of course, only a few minutes had passed. This was only possible because of the power dwelling inside the Cave of Restriction.

Rocado was in awe. *‘That’s amazing. He’s able to overcome the Restriction of Slumber.’*

It would not be strange if someone fell if they did not even get a wink of sleep for two weeks straight.

As he was already reaching the required achievement, Rocado thought the man would soon move on to the subsequent trial. As if to prove that, the notifications rang.

[The Cave of Restriction proposes to the challenger to challenge the second trial.]

[After a good night’s sleep, the challenger can start taking on the second trial.]

However, something very unexpected happened.

[The challenger has asked to continue challenging the First Restriction’s trial.]

“What...?”

Rocado could not understand.

*'Is he enjoying the first trial?'*

Astonished by the thought that flashed in his head, Rocado hurriedly pulled out his crystal ball to check on the status of the challenger, Minhyuk. He could see Minhyuk with his eyes closed and drool dripping down his chin.

*'He's using image training to eat something?'*

Rocado saw Minhyuk right a number on the ground when he opened his eyes.

*'What does 937 mean?'*

Then, Minhyuk's voice rang in his ears.

[Hehe. I can't sleep until I have eaten 1,000 dishes~]

"..."

Rocado was rendered speechless. Based on those words, 937 represented the number of dishes he ate while doing image training for two weeks.

*'Is he an elephant?'* Rocado genuinely wondered if this was the case.

Chapter 996

[You have completed the First Restriction, 'Slumber.']

[You can now end the Trial of Restriction: Slumber.]

[If you wish, you can remain in the Trial of Restriction: Slumber. If you choose to do so, you can obtain higher achievements.]

Minhyuk was not able to sleep properly for two straight weeks. There was this one time when he accidentally dozed off for ten minutes. Thankfully, the system allowed this much leeway.

Minhyuk's body started to feel heavy the more time he spent inside the trial. At one point, he felt like he would immediately fall into a deep sleep if he closed his eyes just once. However, this trial where everything he wanted to eat could become a reality just by imagining them was far too sweet to pass up.

He had taken advantage of the image training and ate everything he wanted.

*'Back then, there were times when I couldn't sleep for an entire week because of hunger.'*

Yes. It did happen. Even though he wanted to sleep, his head constantly screamed at him and demanded food. He ended up getting insomnia. It was so bad that he could only fall asleep after exhaustion and no longer think of anything. That was how much eating addiction has threatened Minhyuk's life.

*'However, this is different.'*

Minhyuk had suffered from indescribable pain because of hunger and sleepiness for a very long time. However, during this Trial of Restriction: Slumber, he only needed to endure for two weeks.

Of course, no matter how great a person was, being unable to sleep for even five minutes for two weeks straight was impossible. Perhaps this was why the system allowed Minhyuk to doze off occasionally.

Besides, the situation was completely different from before. After all, Minhyuk could not sleep, but he was still happy since he could eat everything he wanted.

*‘I think it’s more accurate to say that every cell in my body is awake, right?’*

Because he could eat delicious meals constantly through his image training, Minhyuk did not feel he had the time to worry about sleeping. And without hesitation, Minhyuk extended his time in the first Trial of Restriction. Only after he had eaten a thousand meals did he stop and fall into a deep sleep.

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Rocado, who watched Minhyuk fall into a deep sleep after completing the first Trial of Restriction, could see what the young man was like as a person.

*‘I heard that there’s a god who likes to eat. It seems like he is that god.’*

Rocado smiled bitterly. If that were indeed the case, then the second trial would be harrowing for him because the following restriction was *eating*.

*‘I promised to reinforce whatever artifact he wants to get reinforced if he can clear two trials.’*

Of course, he also had some doubts. He wanted to know why this young man came to see him.

Rocado, who was looking at the crystal ball, coughed. “Urk...?”

Red blood dripped down Rocado’s chin. He felt like time was not on his side any longer.

Although he found it surprising that the young man could clear the Restriction of Slumber, Rocado was sure that removing the subsequent trial would be impossible for him. So, he could only increase the rewards and give the young man the driving force and motivation to clear those trials.

Rocado manipulated the rewards once more, but this time, he had to set conditions for them. This reward was something no one should be able to obtain easily.

Once the second trial began, the young man would be informed of the changes. However, the conditions to obtain this reward were not easy.

*‘You need to obtain 90% achievement.’*

In Rocado’s eyes, it was impossible. Some couldn’t even reach 50% achievement in the Trial of Restrictions. But Rocado hoped that this man could at least get 50% achievement and come to meet him here so that he could leave Herakel in his care.

With a bitter look, Rocado turned around and left the crystal ball behind.

*‘There’s no more time left.’*

He sat down and continued working on his long-term project. Right in front of him were around 9,980 portraits of the same woman. It was quite a grotesque sight.

*'I have to finish 10,000 paintings before I die.'*

That was the only way for Rocado to meet *her* again.

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Minhyuk, who fell into a deep sleep on the bed, finally woke up. The moment he opened his eyes, a series of notifications rang in his ears.

[The second trial of restriction has begun.]

[The second restriction will be eating.]

Minhyuk frowned.

[An unbelievable hunger starts to torment you.]

[This state of extreme hunger will last for three months.]

[From this point on, you are given the choice to add restrictions in your trial.]

[If you choose to endure multiple restrictions, your achievement will significantly increase.]

[If you endure multiple restrictions, the period you need to endure will be significantly reduced.]

Minhyuk looked puzzled. He was going to be tormented by an unbelievable hunger? He waited for a moment for the extreme hunger to come.

*'Nothing's happening, though?'*

Minhyuk scratched his head. His eating addiction was a kind of mental illness that would always make him feel like he was in an extreme state of hunger. In the past, Minhyuk even resorted to eating tissue paper because of his illness. Perhaps that was why the extreme hunger set by the system did not do anything to him. Maybe it was nothing compared to the illness called eating addiction.

*'Not eating anything for three months? It wouldn't be easy for me.'*

Of course, the symptoms of Minhyuk's eating addiction had improved significantly. He no longer had the shocking appetite from the past. However, what about the three months he had to endure not eating anything here? That would probably be very dangerous for Minhyuk.

*'It might just exacerbate my eating addiction.'*

Although Minhyuk was not suffering from any eating addiction symptoms, the only reason why he was not experiencing those was because he was able to eat whatever and however much he wanted in Athenae and satisfy his raging appetite.

But now, he was left in a situation where he could not satisfy that appetite for three months. This would most likely worsen his eating addiction.

*'Should I give up?'*

However, the rewards he could receive were far too sweet and tempting to give up like that. He could reinforce the Sword of Aeon once, complete Evangel, and meet with one of the Eight Pillars, Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado.

Then, at that moment.

[If you achieve more than 90% inside the Cave of Restriction, you can obtain a Pillar Ingredient.]

[Achieving 90% of achievement inside the Cave of Restriction is nearly impossible.]

“...?”

Minhyuk was quite surprised. The Pillar Ingredient had not yet appeared in the world. If he could obtain an ingredient that had not yet been released, he would probably also be able to obtain a title as a reward.

*‘I wonder how delicious the Pillar Ingredient is?’*

The thought alone was enough to make his mouth water.

*‘As expected, giving up without even trying does not fit with me.’*

He could just quit if he felt like it was too hard.

*‘No.’*

There should be another way to tackle this. Minhyuk pondered the matter for quite a while before making his decision.

“I will take the third restriction and the fourth restriction together with the second restriction.”

If Rocado had seen what he did, he would have been shocked. Perhaps he would even shout at Minhyuk that he was crazy. However, there was no other way.

First, the notification clearly said that obtaining 90% achievement inside the Cave of Restriction was almost impossible. But the Pillar Ingredient was dangling right in front of him.

*‘I need to endure this much to obtain that.’*

[The third restriction is repetition.]

[The fourth restriction is darkness.]

[With the second, third, and fourth restrictions carried out at the same time, the total duration of the trial will be significantly reduced.]

[With the three restrictions simultaneously, the achievement rate will significantly increase.]

[The duration of the trial will be reduced to four weeks.]

[You have to repeat doing something for four weeks straight. If there are more than three seconds between repeated actions, the trial will be considered a failure.]

[You will not grow tired even if you don’t sleep.]

[You will not be able to see anything for four weeks.]

“...”

Minhyuk found that these Trials of Restriction had one thing in common. And that was the fact that one had to endure *loneliness and solitude*. In the first trial, he has to endure being unable to sleep in

a space devoid of another's presence. And now, in this space, he had to struggle against hunger, repeat an action non-stop without anyone's support, and even be trapped in the darkness where no one would hold his hands and comfort him.

Initially, it would take a year for Minhyuk to complete all the existing trials. Although the time had been shortened, it should still be unbearable. But even so, there was still a faint smile on Minhyuk's face.

*'I have lived in the darkness for many years.'*

Of course, many people cared and cheered for him. However, during those times, he had always felt alone. After all, he was the only one suffering from eating addiction. He was the only one dying. But Minhyuk was able to step away from that world. Because of that, Minhyuk was stronger than anybody else.

[Please start the repetitive action.]

Minhyuk grabbed his sword as he slowly stood up.

*'The best way to overcome hunger is to keep moving and exercising.'*

When his body was enduring the pain of working out, his overwhelming hunger often softened and disappeared for a bit. It was like a drop in the ocean, but that did not matter.

Minhyuk swung his sword.

[Darkness encroaches upon your vision. You will not be able to see anything.]

The world around him disappeared.

Minhyuk's posture might be messy, but he continued to swing his sword in this darkness. But there was something that this trial did not know.

Minhyuk was a player who had worked harder than anybody else in Athenae. Everyone acknowledged this fact when they saw the ZTube video titled "The Burden that an Emperor Carries" and saw how much effort Minhyuk had made.

Even though he could not see what was ahead of him, Minhyuk did not stop. He just repeatedly swung his sword.

Swoosh—!

Even in a situation surrounded by darkness, Minhyuk continued to swing his sword and think about the things he lacked.

Swoosh—!

Even though everything around him had disappeared, he considered this an opportunity to study his body and awaken his senses.

Swoosh—!

How long has it been since he started this? Perhaps he had been doing this for a day? Two days? Or three days? Minhyuk did not know. However, there was one thing that he knew. The monster named hunger was gradually creeping up on him. That was why he had started to swing faster and stronger.

As for the darkness that consumed him?

*'It's scary.'*

It was still fine up until a few moments ago. However, with only the sound of his sword cutting through the wind as he continued to swing accompanying him, fear started to appear and devour him.

Throb, throb—

But that was not all. His arms started to throb and twitch from the continuous swinging of his sword. People often became vulnerable when doing something repeatedly, and it was not easy for someone to do something repeatedly for more than a few hours.

Of course, Minhyuk could still endure it since he often changed the actions he had to repeat. He would swing his sword horizontally, thrust his sword forward, and do other actions. He would repeat these actions repeatedly and change them once he started to falter. However, it was still challenging.

How long has he been doing this? He was completely unaware. He just felt like this monster-like hunger was chasing him in this darkness. The more he thought this way, the faster and stronger his strikes and the more focused he became.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—

Minhyuk continued to swing his sword.

*'How long have I been doing this?'*

He still did not know. All he knew was that he was engulfed by the fear of this darkness and this terrible hunger. However, no matter how tedious it was, he repeated his actions.

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Rocado, who had been painting since earlier, stopped. Now, he only needed to paint a few hundred more to meet with the dead Eirin. However, it would only remain as a wish. His body was telling him that he did not have much time left. He felt like his body had already started to turn stiff.

Rocado no longer had any Herb of Immortality, which had the shocking power to extend a human's lifespan by 80 years.

“Haa... Haa...”

Just a bit longer. I just need to stay alive for a bit longer.

He just needed enough time to finish those few hundred paintings. But Rocado did not know whether he could last for two more hours.

*'My calculations are completely wrong.'*

He thought that he could last for at least a few more months. However, that was nothing but mere arrogance on his part.

“Ugh!”



Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado was the Father of Dexterity who had disappeared from the world. He was also one of the Eight Pillars. However strange as it might sound, he believed in a myth. This myth said that if someone could finish 10,000 god-grade paintings, they could meet with the dead. He trusted this myth and did everything that he could to achieve it.

One of the Eight Pillars?

*'Bullshit. I'm just a normal human being.'*

He was just someone who wanted to be with the person that he loved.

"Rocado, hurt. Rocado, hurt!" Herakel hurriedly ran to where Rocado was.

Rocado, sitting in front of the painting he was working on, fell on the ground just like that. *'I should have made a potion in advance.'*

Rocado did not make any potion because he thought he could meet her. But there was still a way.

"Herakel..."

He could still make potions if Herakel could pick the herbs for him. After all, he was not the Jack-of-all-Trades for nothing. He could still make potions even on the brink of his death. However, he could not open his mouth.

*'Herakel can't pick that herb.'*

The Herb of Breath could only be collected by someone with great DEX. If Rocado asked Herakel to collect such an herb and he failed to do so, then Herakel would resent himself for the rest of his life for failing to meet Rocado's request.

"...Herakel."

"Rocado, hurt. Rocado, die... die, can't!"

At this moment, Rocado felt very sorry for Herakel.

*'I have to ask him a favor. For Herakel's sake.'*

That unidentified challenger who was taking on the Trial of Restriction would fail. No. Even if that man had succeeded, by the time he had walked out of that cave, Rocado would have already become a cold, stiff corpse. So, Rocado tried to tell Herakel to ask the man for a favor once he arrived here.

Thud– Thump, thump–

The crystal ball in Rocado's arms rolled on the ground. Rocado's eyes were drawn to the crystal ball that showed the figure of the man taking on the trial. However, what he saw in the crystal ball made his eyes widen from shock.

Notifications were flashing constantly on the crystal ball.

[The challenger took on the trial of the second, third, and fourth restrictions simultaneously.]

Rocado, who was almost at his last breath, was left in shock.

*'This– He's crazy...!'*

Did he challenge three trials all at once? How long has he been doing this?

*'No one would be able to last twenty days from that. They would have already gone crazy by then.'*

Hunger, darkness, repetition, solitude—all of these combined could grind a human down and force them into madness. No matter how strong a person's mentality, they would still be unable to endure that.

The trial was supposed to last an entire year or one whole day. However, if all three trials had been undertaken together, that time would have been significantly shortened.

*'If that's the case, then perhaps he could still save me...'*

However, Rocado realized that it was nothing but a pipe dream. Rocado immediately abandoned this dream.

*'No. He's crazy. Maybe the trial is already over,'* Rocado thought as he focused on the crystal ball.

Then, he saw the man, covered in sweat, swinging his sword non-stop inside the darkness where nothing else was in sight.

At that moment, another notification appeared in Rocado's eyes.

[There are two minutes left in the second, third, and fourth trials.]

"...?!"

Rocado's eyes grew even wider. Not long after, he heard the man, still swinging his sword, mutter to himself.

[How long have I been doing this?]

[Fifteen days? Twenty days?]

Exhaustion was evident in his voice.

[I'm so hungry. I feel like dying. Please. I want to eat something.]

It was only natural. The restriction of eating would chip away at his sanity.

[I'm so tired. I feel like my entire body will burst. I think I'm going to go crazy after repeating these things over and over again.]

That was reasonable. Repeating an action non-stop would not only bring pain to one's body but would also bring pain to one's mentality.

[It's too dark. So scary. How long do I have to freaking stay in this place?]

On top of that, the world around him is covered in darkness. However, despite his words, the young man continued to swing his sword. Even though he sounded so exhausted, he still kept on moving.

[But...]

Rocado's pupils started to shake as he looked at the young man through the crystal ball. He could see a slight smile on the man's face. And the words he uttered brought a shiver down Rocado's spine.

[...I can do it.]

Chapter 997

[The challenger has completed the second, third, and fourth trials at the same time.]

[The challenger has achieved 65% within the Cave of Restriction.]

The goosebumps that rose on his back brought a shiver down Rocado's spine.

The darkness that brought fear upon the man slowly cleared out, the repetitive actions that made it hard for his body to cope stopped, and even the hunger that chased after him disappeared.

Once the trial ended, the man hurriedly took a piece of bread out of his inventory and began to eat it.

*-I can do it.*

This was an opportunity for Rocado to discover what kind of person this man was. *I can do it.* These words were words that anyone could say. However, a person could easily change their words at any time, depending on the situation that they were in. Perhaps it was nothing but someone else's arrogance or just someone's false bravado. However, the man spoke those words with great determination and conviction.

*-I can do it.*

When he uttered those words, Rocado felt like the man was showing how he had overcome the hardships and trials presented to him. Although they were only four words, they clearly showed how the man lived his life.

*'I think I can understand to some extent why he was able to clear the second, third, and fourth trials.'*

A bleak smile appeared on Rocado's pale face. He believed entrusting Herakel to that man would be fine once he was laid to eternal rest. Rocado had been very anxious. He could not stomach leaving Herakel to someone he did not know. However, that was no longer the case right now.

Then, a bitter expression settled on Rocado's face. *'Please, that's enough. Please stop now.'*

There was one last trial left. The problem was that the final trial was the hardest and most difficult trial. It was so hard that even the system stated that one could choose not to take it as long as they achieved more than 50% in the first four trials.

Rocado believed that the man would never be able to clear the fifth trial. Why?

*'Because you will never be able to beat me.'*

Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado's clone would appear in that trial. Rocado's clone was just like Rocado. No. He was like Rocado in his prime. Because of that, Rocado believed that the man would not be able to clear the final trial.

*‘But if he can face another truth, things would be different.’*

But that sounded almost impossible. So, Rocado just hoped that the man would give up and come to this place immediately.

The man finally made his choice.

[The challenger chose to continue. He will now challenge the Cave of Restriction’s final trial.]

“...”

Rocado looked at the crystal ball bitterly.

Even if the man reached 50% achievement, if he failed to clear the final trial, then he would die. If that happened, then the road to this place would disappear forever. Not only that, the dying Rocado would also die and disappear from the world.

Rocado only had about an hour left.

“Urk...!” He vomited another mouthful of blood. After pondering deeply, he said, “Herakel, even if he can’t come to this place, make sure to come and find him. Tell him what I told you before and ask him for a favor.”

Darkness slowly crept upon Rocado’s vision the moment he finished his words.

Thud—

Then, he fainted.

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After clearing three trials, Minhyuk frantically ate bread to satisfy his hunger.

The first few days, he did not feel any hunger. However, as time passed, an extreme hunger began to engulf him. The feeling was quite similar to what he felt during the worst time of his eating addiction. Because of that, he focused more on the repetitive actions that he was doing and forced his body to the limit.

At that time, he pondered deeply about the words that he said.

*–I can do it.*

These words carried tremendous powers. They were the reason why he could endure and continue to stand. These words were the words that made him into what he was now.

Once he felt like his condition had stabilized to some extent, a series of notifications rang in his ears.

[You have completed the 1st~4th trials of the Cave of Restriction.]

[You have completed three Trials of Restriction with shocking results.]

[Your total achievement rating is 65%.]

[If you choose to leave the Cave of Restriction, you can ask Rocado to reinforce any of your artifacts once.]

[There is one last trial remaining.]

[You have reached more than 50% of the achievement inside the Cave of Restriction. You can now stop challenging the Trial of Restriction.]

[Warning. The final restriction is tough to overcome.]

[Warning. The final restriction is tough to overcome.]

Minhyuk had never experienced this before. The notification window was blinking non-stop, and had recommended that he stop the trial.

*‘In the first place...’*

The trials set in this place were impossible to clear. Even the first four trials were challenging. Even if an ordinary person could clear those trials, they would not be able to achieve more than 50% achievement.

*‘That’s why I must challenge and see the last trial to the end.’*

The fact that the notification suggested that he stopped the challenge and did not take on the last trial meant that it was not something anyone could clear. However, Minhyuk had already found something out.

*‘Pillar Ingredients.’*

He had already discovered that Pillar Ingredients existed in this world. He just could not give up when one of those ingredients was already within his reach, no?

“Proceed to the last trial.”

The notifications immediately rang.

[The final restriction has begun.]

[The final restriction is frustration.]

[You have to win against Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado.]

*‘I have to go against Rocado and win?’* Minhyuk thought, an ominous feeling washing over him.

The problem was this ominous feeling soon became a reality.

[You will compete against Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado in a never-ending match.]

[In this competition against Rocado, you must create something non-stop.]

[You can choose whatever you want to produce.]

[The system observes you and your opponent. The system will temporarily increase your DEX and skills related to DEX and production.]

[You already possess a power beyond the level that the system can increase. You will not receive an increase in stats and skills.]

[It will be considered a victory if you can create the highest grade of whatever you want to produce and reach 70% of Rocado's score within three days.]

[Everything that you produce will be given a score.]

[God-grade will receive 10 points. Legendary-grade will receive 7 points. Epic-grade will receive 5 points. Anything below these grades will not have any corresponding scores.]

[You will continue to compete against Rocado even if you lose.]

[It doesn't matter how long the competition will take. In reality, only five minutes will pass.]

*'...Oh my f\*cking god?'*

Minhyuk's jaw dropped when he saw that he had to compete and win against Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado. That man was the Father of Dexterity, you know? However, Minhyuk thought that he might still have a chance.

*'If it's 70%, then...'*

Minhyuk possessed the highest DEX among the current players and known NPCs in Athenae. But that was not all. His DEX had continued to increase with the dozens of dishes he made daily. Compared to the chances of Hyemin'sDaddy, a player with an extremely high DEX, creating a God-rank artifact, Minhyuk's chances of making a God-grade dish were several times higher. This meant that Minhyuk had a high probability of making several high-grade dishes.

*'He might be one of the Eight Pillars, but...'*

He thought that it was worth a try.

The walls of the cave that surrounded Minhyuk changed. Now, he was standing on a vast and never-ending meadow.

[You can create the ingredients and tools that you need just by imagining it. You can even make a kitchen or a smithy.]

As long as he could imagine it, it would appear and be created before him.

Finally, Minhyuk saw Rocado appear in front of him. The Rocado in front of Minhyuk differed from the Rocado that Herakel had described.

*'From what I heard, he looks like a middle-aged man, though?'*

But the Rocado standing in front of him looked like a young man. And he was even looking at Minhyuk with an indifferent gaze.

"Hello?" Minhyuk said.

However, Rocado did not respond. Then, another series of notifications rang.

[The Rocado in front of you is a clone of the real Rocado.]

[Clone Rocado has Rocado's power during his prime.]

Only then did Minhyuk realize that the Rocado before him was not the real Rocado.

*'I could make ten legendary-grade dishes in a row in the past.'*

It happened quite a long time ago, but it was true that he made those dishes. He even won the bet against the God of Cooking back then. This time, he had a three-day deadline. But even if he failed, he could still continue making whatever he wanted to make repeatedly. Minhyuk believed that he would be able to replicate what he had achieved back then.

Then, the notification rang once again.

[The competition will now begin.]

Rocado, who instantly created a massive smithy in front of him, walked inside. Minhyuk looked at him as he imagined an optimized kitchen to help him make better dishes. The moment he thought of it, it appeared right before him.

*‘With this, my chances have gone up.’*

If one thought about it, this trial was a challenge of creating as many high-grade items as possible. And when it came to artifact production? It would take a lot of time. At least a lot more time than cooking. Because of that, Minhyuk thought that Clone Rocado’s choice was a mistake.

[The Jack-of-all-Trades’ Acceleration has been activated.]

“...?”

Minhyuk turned to look at Rocado in doubt. He had no choice but to correct his thoughts when he saw what was happening.

Fwiiiiish–

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Rocado was moving swiftly. One glance and Minhyuk could tell that he was moving at least ten times faster, just like how he moved when he used the skill *The Famished One’s Cooking*.

*‘No. I can’t even see his movements?’*

Minhyuk’s *The Famished One’s Cooking* was a skill that allowed him to move ten times faster. But Rocado’s *Acceleration* allowed him to move at least twenty times faster than usual.

Rocado only left his afterimage behind as the iron heated up and smoke rose from the smithy’s chimney.

“I can’t lose either.”

Minhyuk immediately calmed himself down. He also sped up his pace by triggering *The Famished One’s Cooking*.

*‘We should start on the right foot.’*

Minhyuk was thinking of moving quickly and making a high-grade dish with spicy stir-fried pork. Of course, all of the ingredients he used were God-grade ingredients he imagined himself. But just when Minhyuk had started to stir-fry the meat with the seasonings on the heated pan...

[Rocado has completed a God-rank Sword.]

“...?” Minhyuk was left dumbfounded.

What kind of speed was that? Wasn't that far too ridiculous? At most, only five minutes had passed since they started, right? But Rocado was able to make it. A bright light burst out from within the smithy as a sword covered in light floated to the sky.

Minhyuk gulped dryly. He was distracted from his cooking after seeing a scene he had never seen before.

This time, Rocado left the smithy and sat on the grass. A huge plaster appeared right before him, an item used for making a sculpture. Then, several mysterious hands appeared in the air. If one looked closely, one would determine that those hands belonged to Rocado. These hands, along with Rocado's own hands, started carving.

Minhyuk had been too naive and careless. The Eight Pillars were the key figures of the world.

Take Obren, for example. He had slaughtered millions of people during his prime. If he had taken the wrong path and was left to become a villain, he might have just killed all of humanity.

Then, there was Helenia. She had slaughtered the transcendentals and posed a considerable threat to the Land of the Gods.

There was also Athenae. She was the god who ruled the world.

And there was Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado. Minhyuk had heard he was a human with a close relationship with Herakel.

Perhaps Minhyuk underestimated Rocado because he had never heard of his achievements. After all, there was no story about him or anything circulating.

A magnificent and outstanding statue was completed in less than fifty minutes.

[Rocado has completed a God-grade Sculpture.]

Minhyuk could only stare blankly at Rocado. Rocado did not choose to focus on one thing. He made it so he would create something from each production class profession one after another.

After he finished the sculpture, Rocado moved on to painting and cooking.

[Rocado has completed a legendary-grade Dish.]

This time, he moved on to jewelry making.

[Rocado has completed a God-rank Necklace.]

Minhyuk could only watch Rocado's overwhelming display of power. Of course, he had also judged that watching Rocado work would benefit him and whatever he would produce.

Finally, Rocado's pace slowed down. It seemed like the Jack-of-all-Trades' Acceleration had finally ended. Even the multiple hands that surrounded him also disappeared. However, that did not remove the fact that Rocado was moving at a tremendous speed as he continued to make various things.

[Rocado has completed a legendary-rank Armor.]

[Rocado has completed a legendary-rank Sculpture.]

[Rocado has completed a legendary-rank Sailing Boat.]



[Rocado...]

[Rocado...]

Minhyuk felt his mouth grow dry as he listened to the notifications that constantly rang in his ears. He was so engrossed with the scene before him that he unknowingly let time pass by just like that.

Once three days had ended, Minhyuk was greeted with the countless items that Rocado had created. They were stacked behind him like a mountain.

[Rocado has created a total of 9 God-grade items.]

[Rocado has created a total of 51 legendary-grade items.]

[Rocado has created a total of 37 epic-grade items.]

[Rocado's total score is 632.]

A sense of loss suddenly washed over Minhyuk. Then, the notifications rang once again.

[You are the only person who has watched one of the Eight Pillars, Rocado, work for three straight days.]

[In his prime, Rocado could make around 20 God-grade items in a single day.]

[Rocado is not only a human but also the living and breathing myth and the pillar that ruled and controlled dexterity.]

[You have gained a 1% increase in DEX as a reward.]

However, the notification did not bring Minhyuk joy. For the first time in his life, Minhyuk thought, *'Can I really do this?'*

At the same time.

Herakel was left restless as he gently placed Rocado, who had lost consciousness, on his bed. He was so helpless that he could only stomp his feet as he watched Minhyuk through the crystal ball.

"Have to do it. Have to save Rocado," Herakel mumbled as he started to cry.

In Herakel's eyes, no one in the world could beat Rocado when it came to things related to dexterity. That was why he cried despite saying that Minhyuk had to do it.

Then, Herakel remembered the conversation that he had with Rocado in the past.

*–Rocado. Herakel knows no one can beat you in the world. Herakel is correct, right? But Herakel thinks the last trial is strange.*

*–That's right, Herakel. No one in the world can beat me when it comes to things related to dexterity. That is why the name of the trial is "Frustration."*

*–Strange! If you can't do it, then why did Rocado make it? Herakel thinks it's strange!*

Back then, Rocado chuckled lightly at him.

*–Actually, that trial has two restrictions. Even I can't tell which of the two restrictions is the trial's actual restriction. One of them is the Restriction of Frustration. You should know that, right?*

*–Herakel knows! Didn't Rocado tell Herakel that just now?*

Rocado smiled, pride evident on his face. Then, Herakel, whose curiosity had been piqued, asked.

*–Herakel wants to know. What is the other one?*

Herakel wanted to know the other restriction. The one that made Rocado say that he did not know which of the two was the actual restriction of the trial. Rocado chuckled as he raised one finger.

*–It's none other than the Restriction of Patience.*

Chapter 998

Special Players Management Team.

President Kang Taehoon, Employee Lee Minhwa, Team Leader Park Minggyu, and Manager Kim Dae-Il watched Player Minhyuk through the screen.

In just three days, Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado obtained a score of 632. It was a shocking record. On the screen, they could see the despair on Minhyuk's face. He looked like he had suffered a significant loss.

“It's not that easy to meet with one of the Eight Pillars,” Manager Kim Dae-Il said.

This was especially the case for Rocado. After all, among the Eight Pillars, he was the only one who could bestow power upon someone. The ridiculous items that he produced could display an equally absurd amount of power.

Because of that, the Story Team made it so Rocado would only live briefly. Why? That was because Athenae's balance would be broken entirely when Rocado appeared and started to create artifacts.

Team Leader Park nodded. “That's not all. Clone Rocado's priority is to make items as quickly as possible. As for the various powers and skills in his possession? He hasn't shown everything yet. If he used those powers, the items he produced would be more overpowered than those he had produced now.”

That was right. The items that Rocado had created were nothing but mass-produced items. Once he tried to make something outstanding, more outrageous items would appear. This was why they all deemed that the Cave of Restriction and the Restriction of Frustration created by the Story Team were impossible to clear.

Before coming here, President Kang Taehoon visited Athenae to ask her.

*–What is the probability of Player Minhyuk clearing the Restriction of Frustration?*

Supercomputer Athenae replied.

*–0.01%.*

“...”

This conclusion was made after Athenae had analyzed everything, including Player Minhyuk's overwhelming DEX. It was pretty hard to believe that Minhyuk, a player with the highest DEX and someone who made the most high-grade dishes among the players of Athenae, only had a 0.01% chance of success.

"Player Minhyuk's greed had made him miss the opportunity to have his artifact reinforced and Evangel completed," Manager Kim Dae-Il said.

Dae-Il also liked and respected Player Minhyuk. However, he firmly believed that the young man's challenge to this trial, despite the system's warning, was mere arrogance just because he wanted to obtain the Pillar Ingredient.

The Trial of Frustration could go on for hundreds of years, depending on the challenger's desires. However, humans were far too weak. Minhyuk would continue to feel how impossible this task was, and that horrifying feeling would gnaw away at his spirit and mentality until he collapsed.

At that moment, Team Leader Park rubbed his chin and said, "We don't know yet if the ending of Rocado's story will be a tragedy or a happy ending."

Team Leader Park was trying to say they should not make any hasty conclusions since Player Minhyuk has not yet failed.

"I hope the ending to Rocado's Story is happy."

NPC Rocado's story, which Athenae's Story Team created, was sad and pitiful. Anyone could experience it. Perhaps they would also understand how he became the protagonist of this tragic and pitiful story.

"I hope so, too." President Kang smiled bitterly.

Lee Minhwa suddenly piped, "The Player Minhyuk that I know would not give up so easily."

None of them answered. They also wanted to believe her words.

Taehoon thought, *'We'll have to see if this will be a tragedy or a happy ending.'*

At the same time, he recalled the rest of his conversation with Athenae.

*-0.01%. That's like saying that it's impossible.*

Athenae remained silent for a long time.

*-But...*

*-...?*

President Kang Taehoon stood up straighter. His ears perked up as he focused on the word "but."

*-If he learns the truth about this Trial of Restriction, his chances will increase to 20%.*

*-...!*

President Kang Taehoon wondered as he continued to stare at the monitor. Would Minhyuk be able to learn the truth?

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When the second competition began, Minhyuk finally realized Rocado's worth and started cooking. He was giving it his all.

Minhyuk shone the brightest when he was trying to do something and facing something others thought impossible to conquer. He slowly fell into a trance as he continued to work, filled with determination and the will to win.

The Divine Will gave Minhyuk the strength to cook non-stop for three days. Even his overwhelming DEX helped him during the second competition.

After three days...

[You have completed 1 God-grade item.]

[You have completed ten legendary-grade items.]

[You have completed 17 epic-grade items.]

[Your total score is 165.]

The tense and strained Minhyuk slowly came out of his trance and finally breathed a sigh of relief. Not long after, he heard Rocado's score.

[Rocado's total score is 731.]

Minhyuk's face grew twisted.

*'Where did I go wrong? Did I lose my concentration? Or did I make a mistake while cooking?'* He questioned himself after seeing Rocado's score, almost four times his score. *'Or maybe I chose the wrong dish?'*

He questioned himself non-stop. However, he could tell he had not done anything wrong and achieved an incredibly ridiculous result as a player.

One God-grade dish.

Ten legendary-grade dishes.

And seventeen epic-grade dishes.

Other production-class players would need help to create even half of what Minhyuk has created here. That was right. There was nothing wrong with what he had done. It was just...

*'Rocado is far too unreachable.'*

Minhyuk suddenly wondered if he could really do it. However, those thoughts quickly disappeared.

*'I can do it.'*

He remembered the words when he was working out to battle and overcome his eating addiction, and his muscles felt like they were being ripped apart. The exact words rang in his head when his knees were hurting to the point where he felt like he was going to break and fall.

I can do it.

Minhyuk reflected on those words.

There is nothing impossible in this world.

“Again.”

The competition started again. This time, it was easier for Minhyuk to fall into a trance. He devoted himself to his cooking and completely forgot about the existence of the man named Rocado. He even forgot that he was in a competition and continued to do his best as he cooked.

His luck was quite good. He could serve two God-grade dishes in a row, a feat that would be difficult to replicate in the future. That was not all; even the number of legendary and epic-grade dishes he produced then was relatively high.

Minhyuk felt delighted when he finished the last dish.

*‘That’s right. If it’s like this, then maybe I have a chance.’*

Perhaps he would win. However, the wall he had to overcome was too high and sturdy.

[Your total score is 285.]

[Rocado’s total score is 697.]

“...”

Minhyuk gritted his teeth.

Of course, there were times when his luck was good while Rocado’s luck was terrible. If those things were repeated, they would overlap and produce an advantage for Minhyuk. If that happened, then Minhyuk would gain victory.

*‘I only need to reach 70% of Rocado’s score.’*

[Your total score is 275.]

[Rocado’s total score is 511.]

Minhyuk’s face grew ugly. He did not know what to feel.

*‘I... I can’t do it...?’*

In his entire life, the only time that he felt *frustration* was when he was battling his eating addiction. But now, something else was making him feel frustrated. And this frustration was starting to devour him.

No matter how hard I try, I will not be able to win.

I can’t win against Rocado. I should give up now.

It will only be a waste of time.

The frustration was starting to suffocate him. But he gritted his teeth.

Again.

[Your total score is 175.]

[Rocado’s total score is 890.]

And again.

[Your total score is 241.]

[Rocado's total score is 766.]

He did not back down.

[Your total score is 111.]

[Rocado's total score is 1,031.]

He did not fall.

[Your total score is 103.]

[Rocado's total score is 675.]

He continued.

[Your total score is 87...]

[Rocado's total score is 755...]

Minhyuk no longer knew how many days had passed since he started this. He ended up pounding the ground crazily with his fists. No matter how hard he tried or how he told himself he could do it, things just wouldn't work out his way. After all, the restriction in this trial was *frustration*.

“Shit! Shit! Shit!”

He thought he could get closer, but the more he fought, the more he felt like he was getting further and further away from Rocado.

More than two months had already passed. However, despite the time, Minhyuk still had not progressed much. Even so, he still gritted his teeth.

“Frustration? There's nothing that can make me frustrated in this life!”

Minhyuk gave it another try. This time, he made *poison*. He cooked the dish with all his venom, bitterness, and resentment.

[Your total score is 55...]

However, that poison slowly encroached upon Minhyuk and began to devour him. Despite that, he continued again, and again, and again, and again. He did not stop challenging the trial. In the end, Minhyuk fell to the ground. The feeling of frustration tormented him.

I can't do it. No matter how much I tell myself I can do it, I still can't.

But he still stood up.

‘*Even so, I have to do it.*’

He continued to challenge this never-ending competition. In just a blink, five months had passed in the trial. At this point, Minhyuk did not know what he was doing anymore. He felt like his mind and spirit were collapsing on their own.

He sprawled on the ground and laughed like a madman. “Ha– Hahahahahahaha! Hahahahahahaha!”

In reality, Minhyuk was no god. He was just a normal human being who made crazy efforts to reach where he was today. And a human like him dared to think he could beat one of the Eight Pillars, a being that was even superior to a god?

No. I have to do it.

Just like that, the sixth month passed. Minhyuk's head suddenly turned blank. With his hands on his knees, he supported his body as he gasped for air. He looked exhausted.

His rapidly beating heart made it feel like his surroundings were caving in on him. Then, Minhyuk's body started to tremble as he cried and wailed.

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Joy Co. Ltd.

An emergency meeting has been called.

For Minhyuk, who was inside Athenae, six months had already passed. However, in reality, only a few minutes had passed. This was one of the main reasons why the executives could check in on him and watch his situation from time to time.

Through the video, everyone could see how frustrated Minhyuk was. As the executives watched him, one said, "Did he go crazy...? How can a sane person do something repeatedly for six months straight?"

"This is completely different from before. Even though Player Minhyuk had always done hard and repeated labor, he had never gone past a month."

Kim Han-Wool, a psychiatrist who was also in attendance for this meeting, said, "And this has gone on for six months straight. An ordinary person would have already gone crazy. In the first place, a person can't accomplish what he wants to do. Even if he stays there for six months or longer, if things continue at this rate, then Minhyuk will be in danger."

"Do you think that he has already reached his limit?" Kang Taehoon asked with a grave tone in his voice.

"He has already gone beyond his limit. You can see it, can't you? During those six months, the frustration has been tormenting him. It has been weighing down on him non-stop. Look at him now."

On the monitor, they saw Minhyuk shaking and sobbing with his hands on his knees. Seeing this, the executives piped up one after another.

"We have to stop this right away."

"This is now beyond our game."

"We all know that Player Minhyuk is an outstanding player. However, this is still too much for him."

"Please make a decision now. We have to force him to log out!"

"President!"

Kang Taehoon could not deny the words of his executives. Even though the management and the operators should not directly intervene in the game and a player's decision, they must stop him now.

They had to stop him even if Player Minhyuk wanted to continue the challenge. At the same time, he wanted to applaud and praise him.

“I admire him.”

He kept repeating what he was doing for six months without any achievements and only frustration. No one in this room could achieve this, but it was enough.

Kang Taehoon looked at the wailing Minhyuk and said, “We will force Player Minhyuk to log...”

But then...

[I...]

The crying Minhyuk tightened his hold on his knees as he wiped his tears away. Then, he slowly stood up and looked at Rocado with an indescribable expression. Then, with a bitter laugh, he said.

[...can do it.]

[I will do it.]

[I... will not lose.]

“...”

“...”

“...”

Player Minhyuk took one shaky breath after another until he had calmed down and regained his stability. Then, he clenched his fists tightly.

Everyone in the room was rendered speechless. The only thing that they could do was applaud this player and his pride.

However, the world-renowned psychiatrist, Kim Han-Wool, opened his mouth and said, “We still have to stop this. This is already beyond ridiculous. If we follow common sense...”

Team Leader Park Minggyu interrupted him and said, “That’s right. Common sense would dictate that this is beyond ridiculous.”

“...?”

Team Leader Park stared at the monitor and focused on Minhyuk’s clenched fists as he continued, “I have looked into eating addiction. I found out that this is just a different name for the disease. And it was a disease that has existed for a long time.”

“...”

“...”

“According to what I have researched, all patients suffering from eating addiction had died before the age of 21. To this date, the survival rate of patients suffering from this disease is zero.”

“...”



Team Leader Park made eye contact with Han-Wool. “But Player Minhyuk has gone against that zero survival rate. He has gone past improvement and is almost reaching a complete recovery. This is something that neither we nor a doctor like you can explain.”

Han-Wool shut his mouth because Minggyu was right.

Ever since eating addiction had become an issue, many doctors had gathered together to dig deeper into the disease. However, the only thing that they found out was that this disease had zero survival rate. That was why Han-Wool was impressed that Minhyuk could overcome such a disease. After all, he has already reached a realm no ordinary human could attain.

When Team Leader Park saw Minhyuk shake and tremble, he thought stopping him was also the correct choice. However, when he saw Minhyuk on the monitor again, he could not help but smile faintly.

“That’s the kind of person he is.”

Chapter 999

World-renowned psychiatrist Kim Han-Wool was a colleague of Minhyuk’s personal doctor, Lee Jinhwan, at Seoul University’s medical school.

*–Honestly, it was shocking for me. I witnessed an ordinary person overcome the countless papers, materials, and studies we researched and presented.*

Those were the words that Lee Jinhwan had said while they were out drinking.

*–I prayed and hoped from the bottom of my heart for that child to endure and hold out. I kept on asking god, why? Why do you have to take him? I was aware. All of the medical evidence and research that we had done had pointed to that child's death.*

Jinhwan chuckled as he emptied a glass of alcohol.

*–But that child did it. That's the kind of person that child is.*

–...

Han-Wool just clinked his glass with Jinhwan back then. He never really understood why Jinhwan was praising the child so much. As a stubborn and straight-laced doctor, Han-Wool believed the child’s improvement after meeting *Athenae* was a lucky coincidence.

Thanks to this game called *Athenae*, that child was able to improve. Because of that, other patients suffering from eating addiction would also be able to improve by playing the game.

Then, Team Leader Park said, “That’s the kind of person he is.”

Those words made Kim Han-Wool’s heart shake. He had always believed something if it was proven medically and had a scientific basis. He did not believe in miracles.

Team Leader Park’s words carried a lot of meaning. Han-Wool had already admitted that Minhyuk had already gone beyond the limits of a human being at this point.

*‘How can someone only 21 years old do something like that for six months straight?’*

It's already beyond what Kim Han-Wool could explain. The man was frustrated. Extreme frustration would often make one feel helpless and lethargic. But he kept on saying the same thing again and again.

[I can do it.]

Kim Han-Wool was speechless as he watched Minhyuk smile bitterly on the screen.

"I am just one of the team leaders of this gaming company. However, I would like to ask you to let us keep watching Player Minhyuk, who wants to stand back on his feet a bit longer. Just for another month. If anything happens, I will take full responsibility for the matter."

Team Leader Park's words were evidence of how highly he viewed Player Minhyuk. The executives were already speechless when they saw Minhyuk stand back up despite the overwhelming number of setbacks he had faced.

Was there indeed someone like that?

A person who would show all the sincerity in the world and put so much effort into what he was doing. A person who would ignore their inferiority complex and strive to do well. This was the type of person Minhyuk was.

"I'll take responsibility. Let us wait and see first, Doctor Kim Han-Wool," President Kang Taehoon said.

Kim Han-Wool looked at the executives, who had agreed to stop Minhyuk with him before. He could tell that they also wanted to give Minhyuk another shot so he could get back on his feet once more. He closed his eyes and pondered deeply about the matter.

Han-Wool slowly nodded and said, "I have lived and worked as a doctor for a long time. It seems like today would be a special day for me."

He was a stubborn and old-fashioned man who had always chosen to stop his patients and their guardians whenever they tried to cross the line he had set. But this time, it was different.

"If Minhyuk can truly do it, then perhaps this would be a turning point in my life as a doctor." Han-Wool chuckled bitterly.

One more month. He had decided to give Minhyuk that much time.

They all watched the days pass by in the video. Then, President Kang Taehoon suddenly jumped up from his seat. Even the executives reacted the same way as him.

Then, Team Leader Park said, "He has opened up a possibility."

It was because of a notification window that popped up on the screen.

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Minhyuk felt refreshed after he had cried. The words "I can't do it.", which had eroded his mind and almost devoured his sanity, disappeared as he recalled and pondered over the words "I can do it." once more.

The words “I can do it.” were words that could only give Minhyuk strength. But now, it meant far more than that. It was like him saying, “I will continue doing it until I can do it.” Because that was the kind of person that he was.

After coming back to his senses, Minhyuk began cooking once again. This time, his consciousness was sharper and brighter than ever. Even the Divine Will gave him greater power after it got triggered. Perhaps this was God's way of praising those who had stood up after being left in frustration. Not only that, but his luck was turning for the better, too. High-grade dishes continued to appear one after the other.

Armed with the determination to obtain the Pillar Ingredient, Minhyuk worked non-stop. He even completely forgot about his exhaustion.

Three days passed by just like that. In those three days, a smile had always lingered on Minhyuk’s face. Why? Because he realized that he was someone who had not yet fallen to that extent.

Then, the notifications rang.

[Your total score is 297.]

[Rocado’s total score is 675]

The wall named Rocado was still far too high. However, this was the highest Minhyuk’s score had ever reached during the six months he had been doing this. For him, that was enough.

Minhyuk continued to cook. He had already confirmed his limits. Frustration? It no longer bothered him. When he focused on what kind of person he was and how long he had lasted, he felt as if his mind had grown lighter and clearer.

[Your total score...]

[Rocado’s total score...]

He could no longer recall how many times he had done this. Even though his score remained far below Rocado’s, Minhyuk tried again. He just lightly shook off the thought about scores and began cooking again.

[Something hidden within the Trial of Restriction: Frustration shows signs of being revealed.]

[Your chances of creating something extraordinary have increased by 10%.]

“...?”

Minhyuk looked at the notifications in confusion when he saw that something hidden inside the trial was rearing its head and revealing itself. Not only that, but it also helped Minhyuk produce higher-grade dishes.

The restriction of slumber required him to overcome sleep. The restriction of darkness required him to endure and overcome the darkness-filled world. The restriction of repetition needed him to overcome the limits of his body. So, what about the limitation of frustration? Was he required to overcome frustration? To some extent, Minhyuk had tamped down and suppressed this *frustration*.

With the notifications, Minhyuk gained more energy. Although the chances increased by only 10%, his motivation and strength to go further were boosted.

He repeated the competition again and again. He went on for three, six, nine days.

[Something hidden within the Trial of Restriction: Frustration is showing signs of being revealed.]

[Your chances of creating something extraordinary have increased by 15%.]

Minhyuk continued to cook.

And there was something that he found interesting. Throughout this competition, Minhyuk had made more than tens of thousands of dishes. This was a beneficial experience. Although he would not be able to acquire any DEX here, the fact that his cooking would grow even better once he left this place was enough for him.

Then, fifteen days passed by.

[Something hidden within the Trial of Restriction: Frustration is slowly being revealed.]

[Your chances of creating something extraordinary have increased by 20%.]

[Your total score is 329.]

[Rocado's total score is 701.]

The gap between him and Rocado was slowly narrowing down.

Joy Co. Ltd., who declared they would stop him after a month, knew that Minhyuk could continue. There was no longer any need to stop him.

Minhyuk's face grew brighter and brighter by the day. Every inch of his body screamed at him after he had cooked tens of thousands of dishes. Even so, he did not stop.

*'The notifications have changed.'*

The words "showing signs of being revealed" had now changed into "slowly being revealed." For some reason, he felt like whatever was hidden was already within his reach.

After another dozen days.

[Something hidden within the Trial of Restriction: Frustration has started to reveal itself.]

[Your chances of creating something extraordinary have increased by 25%.]

It was finally coming to an end. With the massive boost in his chances, the grades of the dishes that Minhyuk would cook would be higher than ever. Of course, this effect was temporary and would only be in effect inside the Restriction of Frustration. Even so, the delighted smile on Minhyuk's face did not diminish.

*'The wall named Rocado was something that I couldn't reach...'*

[Your total score is 378.]

[Rocado's total score is 699.]

He was finally able to touch it. Just a bit more. Minhyuk felt he only needed to tiptoe a bit, and he could stretch his hands further and reach the top of that wall. He needed to work just a bit harder.

*'A little more...!'*

Another dozen days passed by. No new notifications popped up. But after eleven, twenty, thirty days, the thing hidden inside this trial finally revealed itself.

[Something hidden within the Trial of Restriction: Frustration has revealed itself.]

[This is the only way for one to overcome frustration.]

[It is a different, actual restriction hidden underneath the restriction of frustration.]

[The Restriction of Frustration has changed into the Restriction of Patience.]

[Your patience and endurance have paid off.]

[Your chances of creating something extraordinary have increased by 50%.]

[Your chances will no longer be increased.]

[Your patience has started to erode and break down the thick and sturdy wall of frustration that has blocked your path.]

Minhyuk unknowingly started to cry once again. He finally learned that his struggle against frustration was not done in vain.

Minhyuk began to cook again.

The night passed, and day broke through.

The sun had set, and the moon rose to the skies.

The stars faded away as bright clouds appeared in the sky once again.

[You have completed a God-grade item.]

Once more.

[You have completed a God-grade item.]

Once again.

[You have completed a God-grade item.]

Again.

[You have completed a God-grade item.]

And again.

[You have completed a God-grade item.]

This luck would only come once in one's lifetime. But for someone to use such luck, they had to make an effort and back it up.

After hundreds of days of hard work, Minhyuk had created a synergy with his once-in-a-lifetime luck. He had produced five God-grade dishes in a row. If he were outside in Athenae, the notifications would leave all the players dumbfounded.

But things weren't over yet. Only a day has passed since he started cooking. Minhyuk continued to cook.

pleted a Legendary-grade item.]

pleted a Legendary-grade item.]

pleted an Epic-grade item.]

Minhyuk was smiling brightly despite the sweat dripping down his forehead.

*‘My luck is excellent today.’*

Minhyuk knew that it was okay to lose. As long as he could continue repeating his strategy, there would come a day when his luck would be extremely good.

What was his score? How many dishes has he made? What were the grades of his dishes? Minhyuk no longer noticed these things.

[You have fallen into an extreme trance.]

He no longer knew how many times the notifications rang in his ears. Even the notifications about the creation of God-grade, legendary-grade, and epic-grade items no longer registered in his ears.

Minhyuk, who was crazily absorbed in his work, moved with sweat dripping down his body like a waterfall.

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Joy Co. Ltd.’s conference room.

The executives and operators held their breath as they witnessed an incredibly unbelievable situation.

[Currently, Rocado’s total score is 464.]

[Currently, Minhyuk’s total score is 436.]

Minhyuk finally exceeded 70% of Rocado’s score. This was utterly unbelievable. Through perseverance, he overcame the 0.01% probability that Athenae had initially calculated.

Everyone watched with bated breaths.

It looked like Minhyuk’s luck was very good today. On the other hand, Rocado’s luck went down the drain. There were only four hours left.

*‘If Rocado picks up his speed again, then Minhyuk might just lose,’* President Kang Taehoon thought as he loosened his tie.

Then, something very alarming happened.

[Rocado has made a God-grade item.]

*[Rocado has made a God-grade item.]*

[Rocado has made a God-grade item.]

Rocado started to make high-grade items one after another. With this, Minhyuk’s score, which had surpassed 70% of Rocado’s score, had dropped back to 65%.

*‘Right now, Player Minhyuk is only slightly worse than Rocado.’*

His chances of creating higher-grade dishes had increased by more than 100%. And even his luck was good. But... in the end, would he still return to square one?

The conference hall was filled with another round of surprised gasps this time.

[Minhyuk has made a God-grade item.]

Everyone's eyes grew wide with surprise.

[Minhyuk has made a God-grade item.]

Someone gulped dryly.

[Minhyuk has made a God-grade item.]

Someone was so shocked that they eventually gasped loudly.

[Minhyuk has made a God-grade item.]

Someone even spat out a curse, saying, '*Shit...!*'

Finally, the Restriction of Patience hidden underneath the Restriction of Frustration had ended and bore fruit.

[The Trial of Restriction: Frustration has ended.]

[Rocado's total score is 515.]

[Minhyuk's total score is 518.]

"..."

All of the executives present in the room had gone mute.

The condition for completing the Restriction of Frustration was for Minhyuk to reach 70% of Rocado's score.

*'He won?'*

Chapter 1000

Joy Co. Ltd.'s conference room was engulfed in silence.

For Minhyuk to complete the Restriction of Frustration, he had to reach a score that was at least 70% of Rocado's score. However, none of them expected that a result like this would come out. Even Supercomputer Athenae said his chances of completing this trial were only at 0.01%. But Minhyuk beat Rocado thoroughly.

*'Of course, Rocado's score during the last competition was meager.'*

It meant that Rocado's luck was not very good toward the end. On the other hand, Minhyuk's score was unusually high. The process that Minhyuk went through to reach this result today was something that not only amazed everyone but also brought them great shock.

"If it's like this, what rewards will he receive...?" Manager Kim Dae-Il asked as he looked at the other executives.

The mouths of everyone present snapped shut.

If Minhyuk reached 70% of Rocado's score, he would immediately complete the final trial. But Minhyuk achieved that and even went beyond and won against Rocado. Of course, this was primarily thanks to the temporary increase in his chances of producing higher-grade items. However, it was also right to say that this situation happened because of Minhyuk's efforts.

Soon, the Production Team's leader said, "Rocado will probably set the rewards. The problem is that we wouldn't know what rewards he would give either."

Even though they had yet to catch a glimpse of the rewards, they were sure that the rewards set by one of the Eight Pillars, the Jack-of-all-Trades, would be huge.

"And if it's a skill related to DEX, then it will create an effect with a tremendous synergy with Player Minhyuk and the dishes that he would make in the future."

The executives nodded their heads. None of them piped up to contest and argue why Minhyuk would receive such a tremendous reward. All of them believed that it was only natural.

They all turned to look at the monitor. They held their breaths, and *worry* and *anticipation* were present on their faces as they waited for Minhyuk to obtain the rewards.

"Doctor Han-Wool, are you not going home yet?"

Kim Han-Wool's work was already over. This meant that he could freely leave and go home.

Han-Wool laughed awkwardly and said, "It's so interesting and fun to watch it like this. Also, I'm looking forward to the rewards he will get."

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[Your total score is 518.]

[Rocado's total score is 515.]

Minhyuk was not expecting much. But when he heard the results, his face immediately grew brighter. He did not know how long he had been trying to get 70% of Rocado's score. But now? He felt like the words "walking on air" accurately describe his feelings.

*'I won against Rocado?'*

Perhaps this was something that even Rocado did not expect to happen. Rocado had already judged that no challenger could reach 70% of his clone's score.

Minhyuk flopped down on the ground. He looked at his hands while thinking, *'I did it.'*

The fulfillment that he felt at this moment was greater than ever. He thought that the only reason why he was able to pass the Trial of Restriction: Frustration was because of his perseverance.

At that moment, a series of notifications rang in his ears.

[You have gained victory in a competition against Rocado.]

[You have cleared all of the trials inside the Cave of Restriction with outstanding results.]

[Your achievement will increase significantly.]

[Your overall achievement has reached 96%.]



[Congratulations on patiently overcoming the Cave of Restriction's Restriction of Frustration.]

[Your DEX has increased by 15%.]

[Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado is the one who made the Cave of Restrictions.]

[Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado has left a special reward for those who will clear the Cave of Restriction's Frustration.]

[...active skill: Hands of Almighty...]

[The distribution of rewards has been interrupted.]

Minhyuk looked at his notifications window in confusion. Why was the distribution of rewards interrupted? Then, additional notifications rang.

[You have surpassed Rocado, albeit temporarily.]

[The rewards that will be distributed will be better.]

[The existing Hands of Almighty will be changed to a skill suitable for you.]

[You have acquired the active skill: Food God's Almighty Tool.]

Minhyuk was shocked to see that the system had changed his reward and given him a skill better suited for him. Of course, he immediately checked the skill.

Active Skill

*•When cooking, you can summon two cooking tools. These cooking tools have an ego and will move quickly to do your bidding.*

*•The two summoned tools will be significantly influenced by your DEX.*

*•When cooking, your DEX will receive an additional 20% increase while the skill is active.*

*•When doing something related to DEX other than cooking, your DEX will receive an additional 10% increase while the skill is active.*

*•You might be able to use more tools with ego once you level up.*

"Wow, this is amazing?" Minhyuk gasped in awe.

The skill was only at Level 1, but the power that it could exert was already incredible.

*'My DEX will increase by 20% when cooking. And if I'm not cooking, it will still increase by 10% if I do something related to DEX.'*

Once the skill reached Level 9, there was a high chance that Minhyuk could use as many as ten tools with ego. The thought alone was enough to bring a thrill down his spine.

"Shall I try summoning it once?"

Anyway, the skill would only consume mana.

“Food God’s Almighty Tool.”

[Summoning two tools.]

[Please summon the tools that you want.]

[The Food God’s Almighty Tools will always be kept clean and unstained.]

Minhyuk chose a kitchen knife and a spatula as tools. The moment he decided, a black kitchen knife and spatula appeared. And with a thought, the kitchen knife moved and slashed the air.

With this, Minhyuk had proven that the tools would move and follow the will of the skill user. Of course, it was not easy for tools like these to follow the will of the skill user. However, this Almighty Tool was quite brilliant.

Then, Minhyuk thought, *‘Perhaps you can say I have two more hands. And even my DEX stat will be increased.’*

Minhyuk would be able to make higher-quality dishes at a faster pace. This skill was not only limited to cooking; he could also use it in various ways.

At this moment, a groundbreaking idea suddenly flashed in his head.

“This– This discovery can be considered an innovation...!” Minhyuk shouted in excitement as he immediately carried the idea out.

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President Kang Taehoon groaned lightly after Joy Co. Ltd. obtained information about the Food God’s Almighty Tool. This tool could be said to be the cooking version of the Hands of Almighty that belonged to Rocado.

“The higher the level, the more tools he can summon. And that’s not all. His speed when cooking would also increase.”

Although Minhyuk did not know it yet, the Food God’s Almighty Tool was an exceptionally outstanding skill, its effects matching the name *Pillar* that was placed in its description. If the skill reached Level 9, not only would he be able to shorten his cooking time, but he would also be able to produce many dishes in the skill’s duration. In other words, Minhyuk could make five dishes when he could make a single dish alone.

[This– This discovery can be considered an innovation...!]

Everyone perked their ears when they heard Minhyuk’s shout. Did Player Minhyuk realize how monstrous this skill would be once it leveled up? Everyone looked at the shaking and trembling Minhyuk with trepidation.

They watched as Minhyuk sat roughly on the ground. Then, he changed the tool into a glass before pouring iced americano into it. After that, he took a plate and put a cake on it. And just like a city man, he opened his mouth.

[Please give me a cup of iced americano and a slice of cake.]

The cup of iced americano that Minhyuk had prepared earlier, or in other words, the Food God's Almighty Tool that had been turned into a glass, automatically moved toward Minhyuk's mouth. What he was doing was drinking iced americano without using his hands!

"...?"

"...?"

Han-Wool unknowingly got so absorbed with the scene.

*'On a particularly difficult day, when you can't take a break and catch your breath if I gulp the first sip of that iced americano... I will definitely release a loud gasp without realizing it.'*

And that was what Minhyuk was experiencing right now.

[Kihyaaaa!]

Minhyuk gulped down the bittersweet iced Americano in one go, not lifting a finger. It was indeed a shocking innovation.

Then, Minhyuk summoned another tool—this time, a fork. The fork moved by itself, cut a piece of the cake and pushed it into Minhyuk's mouth. The fluffy and soft cake danced inside Minhyuk's mouth.

[Fufufufu. I did not expect my long-time dream of eating without lifting a finger would come true.]

It was literally what he said. He sat comfortably without lifting a finger while the tools delivered the cake and the coffee in his mouth.

"Ha- Haha..."

The executives could only laugh in disbelief. How could he use such a fantastic skill that way? President Kang Taehoon chuckled. He also found the situation completely ridiculous.

Then, solemnly, Kim Han-Wool said, "That's an excellent way to use it."

"...?"

"...?"

"Even if I lie in bed, the Almighty Tool can move automatically and feed me. It can even bring me the remote control and help me drink water."

"...?"

"...?"

"That's an amazing power. This is a revolution."

That was right. The world-renowned psychiatrist Kim Han-Wool, was a certified homebody.

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Minhyuk, who was leisurely enjoying the skill that allowed him to achieve his lifelong dreams, heard a series of notifications.

[To obtain the Pillar Ingredient, please meet with Rocado.]

[To reinforce your artifact once, please meet with Rocado.]

Minhyuk nodded. *'The Rocado I had faced this time was truly an extraordinary man.'*

If Minhyuk's DEX and his chances of producing higher-grade items did not temporarily increase, perhaps he would never be able to overcome this trial in his lifetime.

Minhyuk was actually very curious about many things. The first one was why someone like Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado lived alone in a secluded place.

*'I think it might be related to Eirin, who Herakel mentioned before.'*

Minhyuk, who wanted to meet Rocado immediately, received a shocking notification.

[Rocado is in a critical condition.]

"...!"

Minhyuk thought that he had to hurry now.

[You have exited the Cave of Restrictions.]

Just like that, he disappeared in a flash of light.

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Jack-of-all-Trades Rocado, who had fainted earlier, had returned to his senses. However, everything around him felt hazy. He felt like he had just woken up after drinking some sleeping pills.

Rocado tried to open his eyes, but his eyelids did not move, and he could not twitch. What about his sense of hearing? He could not hear anything in this darkness. Was he now in the process of falling into his eternal rest?

*'If I go, will we be able to meet there?'*

Rocado held some expectations. He thought that if she were there, then this death would be very comfortable. But when he thought of her, another person came to mind. This person was none other than the young Herakel.

A memory flashed in Rocado's head. It was their first meeting with Herakel. They had decided to marry and adopt Herakel as their son. Before she died, she told him.

*–Please take care of Herakel.*

The moment the memory surfaced, Rocado struggled and resisted desperately from this growing sense of death.

*'Did he... die in the end?'*

As his senses slowly returned, he remembered the reckless man who dared to challenge the last trial of the Cave of Restrictions. That man was such a fool.

*'I can't believe that he chose to fight against me.'*

Even the *Patience*, the restriction hidden inside the *Frustration*, was something no one could achieve.

Rocado, desperately fighting for his senses to return, finally started to feel the pain and hear his surroundings.

“Uweeeeeeeeeek!!!”

Despair slowly crept upon him as he vomited mouthful after mouthful of blood. All his senses, which had been sealed before, returned to him. Rocado desperately fought his heavy lids. When he blinked them open, he caught sight of the crying Herakel.

*'One more time.'*

He wanted to meet her just once, even if it was in hell. That was why he wanted to fulfill the conditions stated in the legends and paint ten thousand paintings. The day he completed ten thousand paintings would be the day that he would meet her. He did not want to meet her because he wanted to do something special for her. There was just something that he wanted to say to her.

Rocado, who kept on opening his eyes, started to close once again. He suddenly saw a very unexpected figure appear in front of him. He was the one who dared to challenge the Restriction of Frustration. Although Rocado was very surprised to see him here, he no longer had the energy to speak or respond to him.

Rocado, with his heavy eyelids, desperately murmured something. “Ei... rin... once more...”

The man also said something in response. “What I want... is... you...”

However, Rocado could not understand or hear what he was talking about. He just answered, “Alright.”

After leaving that answer, Rocado felt like he was about to fall into another deep sleep. Even in his sleep, his mind was still filled with the figure of one woman and one woman alone.

Legend said he could meet with the departed if he could finish drawing ten thousand paintings. He had kept on living, running after that legend. Rocado knew it was the only way for him to meet her again.

Rocado wanted to risk it all and ask the God governing Hell to meet her. However, he knew the God of Death was the most stubborn and difficult god. He could only let this idea die down. What if he asked the God of Death, and she was implicated by it?

At that moment, he felt like his mouth was being filled with dark red blood. And blood had started to choke him. He wanted to throw up. However, for some strange reason, his consciousness began to slowly return to him even though he felt like he was going to throw up again.

“Rocado.”

He saw her. She stood there, tears in her eyes, as she gently touched his cheeks.

Meanwhile, a notification rang for the man standing behind her.

