

Gourmet Gaming

Chapter 2: Game Start

Eating Addiction.

This was one of the rare diseases in the world which currently affected two people at Seoul hospital. Once afflicted with this disease, one would not be satiated no matter how much they ate. A person with this condition? would not care about the type of food in front of them. Be it Korean, Chinese, Japanese or Western cuisine, they would eat it all up. The calorie intake of someone afflicted with eating addiction could reach approximately 15,000 to 20,000 calories in a day.

Kang Minhyuk, a man standing at 185cm and weighing approximately 170kg, was an eating addiction patient.

The man currently in front of Minhyuk was Lee Jinhwan, a renowned psychiatric doctor in the country. Minhyuk visited this man once a week at Seoul Hospital.

It was already getting difficult for Minhyuk to walk by the day with his worsening knee pains. Even his breathing was getting labored and his throat constantly felt strained. In other words, he had already started to exhibit severe symptoms of hyper-obesity.

"You've been eating cherry tomatoes these days, right?"

"Yes."

Minhyuk smiled wryly as he opened the bag that he brought with him. An air-tight container filled with cherry tomatoes was in the bag.

"It seems that you can still get fat while eating cherry tomatoes."

Cherry tomatoes were known as the representative diet food and were around two calories per piece.

"You *do* know that you will still gain weight if you eat diet food in large quantities, right? How much are you eating per day?"

"Around five thousand?"

"...So you're a vegetarian piggy."

"Doc, isn't that too much of a fact bomb?"

Lee Jinhwan smiled bitterly. They could only talk like this because he had been treating Minhyuk for almost five years.

"You know that I exercise too. Around four hours every day?"

"A healthy vegetarian piggy."

"...You also know that I got first place in my CSAT before, right?"

"Then you're a smart, healthy and vegetarian piggy."

"My father owns this hospital."

Minhyuk smiled, wondering how this would turn out.

"Ahhhh..."

Jinhwan scratched his head. He knew that it was a very dangerous topic. However, he soon laughed.

"You're a rich man's son, you study really well and it seems that there's nothing wrong with the other aspects of your life. Then... You're really a very healthy piggy."

"Fine. Why are we even talking about this, doc?"

Both of them laughed loudly.

The atmosphere in the room was light as if they weren't talking about Minhyuk's rare disease. However, the light atmosphere quickly turned gloomy and dreary. It was too difficult to talk about Minhyuk's condition, what was wrong with him and what treatment he could undergo. And Lee Jinhwan always felt the need to ease the mood a little whenever he needed to talk about something serious.

Lee Jinhwan opened his mouth carefully.

"Minhyuk."

"Yes."

"It will be dangerous if you continue on like this."

"...."

Minhyuk was fully aware of this fact.

It was because he was Minhyuk that he was able to endure this much. He exercised for four hours every day and tried to control his appetite as much as he could. For an eating addiction patient, anxiety struck whenever they were not eating something. It was already a miracle that he could maintain his weight at 170kg.

However... the fact that his body had reached its limits still remained.

"I know."

"It's hard, isn't it?"

Minhyuk nodded his head.

"What's the hardest part?"

"When I can't eat what I want to eat."

Minhyuk gestured.

"Doc, think about it," as he smacked his lips.

"My alarm will ring at one in the morning, then I will turn on the gas and put a pot filled with water on the fire. Then, I will break the ramen into halves and add it in."

"Oh."

Jinhwan let out an exclamation as he watched Minhyuk's gestures as if he was holding a pair of chopsticks in his hands.

"I'll stir and cook the noodles well. And when it's done, *tak!*? An egg! I'll crack one and add it in. Most importantly..." T/his chapter is updated by nov(ê(l)biin.co/m

His expression was extremely solemn as if he was talking about some crucial matter.

"I'll hurry up and set it in front of the TV and watch reruns of Infinite Challenge. That's when I'll eat my ramen...!"

Gulp—

The nurse standing behind Jinhwan gulped loudly at his words.

"I'm... I'm sorry! I couldn't help but gulp while imagining the scene."

Minhyuk grinned widely.

"It's the best, right?"

Jinhwan chuckled lightly. He felt relieved to see that Minhyuk did not lose his sense of humor.

"So eating is still the hardest part?"

"I've been eating 5000 cherry tomatoes everyday, of course it's hard."

"But you're still doing very well."

Minhyuk was definitely doing well.

In fact, there were three patients with eating addiction before. However, one of the three had died during spring. He was a 160cm-tall 14 year-old boy who had weighed 200kg. He could not overcome his appetite and failed to control his diet, which eventually caused his death.

"I hope that there will come a time when I can eat what I want to..."

Jinhwan could not answer him. He knew that Minhyuk might really just die when that time came. All he could do was clasp his hands together and steer the topic of their conversation for today.

"I want to suggest a new type of therapy for you."

"A new type?"

Another therapy.

Minhyuk had tried countless treatments and therapies over the course of years but all of them had failed.

"Yes, the virtual-reality game *Athenae*."

"...Didn't it fail before?"

Athenae was the most popular game among all of the existing virtual-reality games out in the market. It currently had more than nine million active users and was still gaining explosive popularity all over the world.

However, Minhyuk has already tried playing virtual-reality games as a treatment for his affliction.

"That previous game was *Versal*," Jinhwan said.

Versal was the virtual-reality game that was released before Athenae.

“Even though it felt real inside the game, there was no sense of taste and it just resulted in a severe yo-yo effect, right?”

Indeed. Versal was a virtual-reality game that had an uncanny resemblance to reality. However, no matter how close its resemblance was to reality, the food inside the game remained tasteless.

Jinhwan looked at Minhyuk and smiled, "You can taste food in *Athenae*."

"What?!"

"I tried it."

"...."

At that very moment, Minhyuk felt like his heart was thumping wildly.

Jinhwan was a doctor with a strong sense of responsibility. Athenae had been launched six months ago. Jinhwan, together with the other doctors who researched eating addiction, believed that it was a disease that was highly related to the mind. That was why initially, they had aimed for Minhyuk to lose weight by repeatedly eating inside Versal. However, satiating the hunger without being able to taste the food proved to be worse for the patient.

This time, it was different. Jinhwan had opened an account in Athenae, tried the game and tasted the food. He could even say that he enjoyed the game.

"You won't gain any weight inside that game even if you eat 100 bowls of ramen at one in the morning."

A professional health trainer for celebrities, an A-class dietitian, and a rehabilitation trainer for national athletes. These three people were watching Minhyuk with his massive build exercising in the pool. Minhyuk's father was the chairman of Ilhwa Group and could afford to hire these people, providing Minhyuk with a very rich and comfortable life.

Right now, the frantic movements of Minhyuk's fat body caused the water in the pool to splash around. In fact, there was only one reason why he could only move around in the water.

'My knees will break if I run.'

Minhyuk had already gone beyond the range of high obesity and running with a body like that would definitely break him. The problem was that his body would still remain

fat, even after the perspiration rolled off his body like rain while working out hard in the pool and burning a lot of calories.

"Ha... Ha... Ha..."

Oh Changwook, Minhyuk's health trainer, struck a conversation with Minhyuk when he saw his ragged breathing.

"Minhyuk, shall we take a break?"

"No. *ha... ha...*? I'll do... *ha... ha...*? a bit more."

No one among the three people present laughed at Minhyuk's fat and disheveled figure. They had seen how desperate he was and how hard he was trying to lose even just a bit of weight.

Splash.

Whenever he moved, the fat in his belly would shake, his breathing would turn ragged and short.

Under the gaze of the three people, Minhyuk recalled the things that he had talked about with Jinhwan back in the hospital.

'I know that you already know this too. But when you played Versal, you ended up gaining 20kg and suffered from a severe yo-yo effect.'

He felt full inside the game but he couldn't taste the food inside. This phenomena triggered an adverse reaction in him.

What should I eat? Ah! I really want to taste it.

Instead of suppressing his appetite, the game had triggered a much larger desire to eat food. That was the main reason why Minhyuk had gained 20kg instead of losing weight, which in turn placed his life in even more danger.

'So, even if you could taste the food in this game, there's still a high chance that you will just experience a different yo-yo effect. You might even develop the desire to taste the food that you ate inside the game in real life.'

Minhyuk was fully aware of that fact. However, he needed to choose the path that he would take right now.

'You can choose whatever you want. But I want to tell you this...'

Jinhwan's expression was filled with bitterness.

'Do we still have any other choice?'

Jinhwan had used the word 'we'. This was telling Minhyuk that he was doing his best, but he had already lost confidence in the other treatments. In other words, they had run out of options.

In fact, what they were scared of was the fact that this treatment could potentially go wrong, and bring out a worse yo-yo effect than before.

"Phew."

Once Minhyuk was done exercising, Oh Changwook and the other trainers helped pull him out of the pool to dry off.

He felt extremely hungry.

'This damn appetite...!'

He felt fine when he was exercising but the moment he stopped moving, his appetite immediately reared its ugly head. For Minhyuk, it felt like someone was screaming in his head to just eat, eat, and eat. That was how terrible this disease was.

As per usual, food was prepared and ready even in the gym.

The food that he was served with was a big bowl of salad made up of cabbages, onions and the staple diet food, cherry tomatoes. Of course, it went without saying that the salad was rid of any sauce. After all, cherry tomatoes and a select few protein supplements were the only food that Minhyuk was allowed to eat.

Crunch, crunch—

Minhyuk kept on putting food in his mouth, trying to satisfy a bit of his insane appetite. However, it did not matter how much he ate, it would still feel like his stomach was empty. Even after he emptied his first bowl. His second bowl. His third bowl and his fourth bowl. Minhyuk would still feel hungry. He would eat continuously regardless of the time and would only stop whenever he was asleep, or when he was exercising. The moment he stopped eating, Minhyuk would experience withdrawal symptoms: seizures, abnormally high heart rate and difficulty in breathing.

In the past, Minhyuk had gone through one of the worst treatments possible.

They had locked him in a room alone without any food, and what resulted was a horrible and traumatic experience. Minhyuk ended up eating the tissue paper that was left in the room.

After finishing his fifth bowl of salad, Minhyuk picked up a box of cherry tomatoes.

"Hyung, is *Athenae* fun?"

"*Athenae*?"

From what he heard, Trainer Oh Changwook was a one of the rankers in *Athenae*.

"Yeah, it's fun. There's nothing more fun than *Athenae* these days."

"I'll give it a try then."

"*Athenae*."

Trainer Oh Changwook smiled lightly.

From what he had observed, Minhyuk constantly spent his days in a simple routine. Exercise, eat, sleep. Exercise, eat, sleep. He did not even try to go out and play with others. So, for Changwook, his only wish for his trainee, was for Minhyuk to be able to live a life like any ordinary person.

"Are you going to play and break a new record again?" Changwook asked.

"*Hehe*.?What can you expect from a man like me? Perhaps this is the touch of a ranker?"

"It's because you're a perfectionist. Maybe you'll become the best then stop playing the game altogether. Is there anything that you don't have?"

"A slim and fit body."

"..."

Changwook grinned, "Sometimes your jokes are not that funny, you know?"

"Then should I cry?"

"No, well..." Changwook ended up mumbling the end of his words. "It's better to laugh."

"*Heave-ho!*"

Minhyuk smiled as he pulled himself up to a stand.

"Do you know where my father is righ..."

Suddenly, Minhyuk felt dizzy. His heart pumped rapidly and his breathing became ragged as his world around him began to spin.

And then...

Thud.?

He fell down.

"M... Minhyuk!!!"

"C... call the doctor!"

The gym was plunged into chaos in an instant.

1. *Extreme obesity*?classification or Class 3 obesity

2. College Scholastic Ability Test

3. A KR variety show

4. Yo-yo diet refers to the cyclic loss and gain of weight which resembles the motions of a yo-yo.

No data found.