

# Gourmet Gaming

## *Chapter 4: Garlic Bread and Soup*

'Great!'

Minhyuk was extremely delighted.

Jinhwan had personally tried the game before and knew that Minhyuk would be able to eat and taste as much as 100 bowls of ramyeon in a single sitting without his game character experiencing side effects. That was also the case even if the user decided to eat after their fullness stat reached 100%.

Through the years of research and treatment, they had concluded that Minhyuk's eating addiction was a psychological illness. In other words, even if his body was full and satiated, his brain would continue to tell him that he was still hungry. Meanwhile, the game's concept of fullness was totally different.

Minhyuk quickly wolfed down the ten loaves of bread in front of Valen before turning around and walking back towards the training grounds. His expression was so serious that anyone who saw him would think that he was going to raid a boss monster.

'I have to eat that... Flour... bread!'

Slash!

His sword struck the scarecrow once again.

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It was already Minhyuk's fourth set of fifty strikes.

In total, he had already done 200 strikes over the course of his time logged inside the game. He had also eaten a total of 32 loaves of bread; Valen had given him the two extra loaves out of goodwill.

A notification had rung earlier relating to this matter.

[You have gained Valen's favor.]

Minhyuk was quite perplexed when he heard this notification. After all, he had only swung his sword and ate his bread. But his favor with the NPC, Valen, still increased. However, it did not matter that much to him. All that mattered was that the bread was delicious.

Just as he completed his fourth set of fifty strikes...

[Your STR has increased by 1.]

'Huh?'

Minhyuk was taken aback by the sudden notification. He quickly opened his stats window to check.

(Minhyuk)

Level: 1

Class: None

HP: 57 ??MP: 50

STR: 7??AGI: 5 ?STM: 5

WIS: 5 ?INT: 5

Fullness: 100%

Bonus Point: 0

His STR stat had really increased by 1.

All right! Let's strike while the iron's still hot.

Minhyuk decided to test his favor with Valen and ask the latter about the notification.

"Instructor."

"Oh, you finished another set of fifty strikes? You're very diligent!"

Valen viewed Minhyuk favorably because the latter was a hardworking and diligent person. But above all, it was because he did not complain about the bread.

"Well. Here you go, I'll give you three more loaves this time."

"Thank you very much!"

Minhyuk quickly bowed at a ninety degree angle before getting straight to the point.

"Instructor, I have a question."

"Go on, you can ask me anything."

"Why did my STR stat go up by one?"

"Oho."

Minhyuk could see that Valen knew the reason just with his reaction alone.

"You will get special rewards if you keep on hitting the scarecrow but it's not something that I usually recommend."

"Eh? How come?"

"Once you go out of Ardo, you will be able to kill monsters and level up easily. Leveling up would give you five bonus points. No one would willingly do something so tedious just for one bonus point. That's why I don't recommend it."

"Aha, as expected of you, Instructor. You're handsome and you know a lot."

"Oh?boy! You're such a smooth talker!" ÚpTodated *novels* on *no(v)el(.)bin(.)com*

"Hahaha!"

[You have gained Valen's favor.]

Minhyuk heard another notification related to favor.

Paying lip service and flattering Valen like this was nothing much for Minhyuk. For him, Valen was like a benefactor. Valen was someone who gave him food when he wanted to eat, so he was eternally grateful to Valen and he did not mind doing something like this for the man.

Besides, I can even get more bread with just a bit of flattery!

Eating was his life's sole happiness and it was also the reason why he was playing the game.

Initially, he wanted to try and have some fun like what his father wanted him to do. Strangely enough, he was still being treated favorably and cared for by others, and was even given additional rewards.

Munch, munch, munch—

Minhyuk quickly devoured his loaves of bread before standing up again.

"Bread! Bread! Crayon bread!"

He sang a strange song as he happily skipped back to where the scarecrows were located.

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Lee Minhwa, a new member of Athenae's Special Players Management team, exclaimed loudly as she watched her monitors seriously.

"How did he do that...? Huh, how can he eat so much of that hard thing? Oh, I can't believe he ate it in one go. You'll be in big trouble."

She sounded like she was doing a commentary of an intense baseball game with how loud she was.

Gulp.

Lee Minhwa unknowingly gulped the drool dripping down her chin as her eyes followed the movements on the monitor.

Then...

"Lee Minhwa."

"Ah. Yes, Team Leader Park!"

Lee Minhwa stood up in a panic, quickly wiping the drool that stained her face.

"What in the world are you watching? You're making very weird noises."

"Erm... T, that..."

Team Leader Park Minggyu followed Lee Minhwa's gaze and saw the scene of a male player tearing down and devouring one hard bread after another on the screen of the monitor.

He could not help but frown at the projected scene.

"You know that our department watches special players, right? We are not a department that watches mukbang users."

Park Minggyu was well-known for being a strict and meticulous team leader. He was something that would not settle for less.

"H, he's a special player."

"What?"

"It's unusual for players to hit the scarecrow 200 times to get rewards, right?"

"That's right."

"That unusual user has hit the scarecrow 200 times in a row."

"Is that so??Hmm...?Did that user get something weird from Athenae's forums?"

This information was something that was widely circulated and known among users. Everyone knew that they would get additional rewards if they continued to hit the scarecrows. However, just hitting a bit more than necessary would not bring any benefits. They had to hit a lot before they could get the rewards and the more they hit, the greater the rewards that they would receive. But with how slow it was, the users gave up on doing it, deeming it as time-consuming, and an inefficient way of leveling up.

"But this user is special."

"Special??Huh, there aren't many users like that."

"That's not it, I get the feeling that he's hitting the scarecrow just so he can get something to eat."

"What nonsense are you saying... Who's crazy enough to hit that scarecrow just to get hard bread?"

"Th, this person right here."

As Lee Minhwa insisted, curiosity arose in Team Leader Park's head. He slowly sat down on her seat and watched the monitor closely. That was when he saw the sweaty and haggard-looking man smiling happily while eating the hard bread in his hands.

Gulp—

Both Team Leader Park and Lee Minhwa gulped as they watched the man devour his bread as though it was delicious.

"Eh? Why can't I stop watching this?"

This is really strange.

Team Leader Park felt like his spirit was being sucked in by the scene. He could not tear his eyes away nor stop himself from watching the man eat. All of his thoughts flew out of the window, replaced by the desire to watch the man continue eating.

"It seems like he's really hitting the scarecrows because he wants to eat. I've never seen a user like this one before."

"I know.?Ah right, wouldn't you be able to get a special reward if you complete the scarecrow quest twenty times within two days?"

"Yeah. A title. But do you think he is willing to eat that tasteless bread twenty times? That would take at least a thousand sword strikes."

"I... Is that so?"

Team Leader Park stretched his back and leaned comfortably on the chair before loosening his tie and staring at Lee Minhwa.

"Miss Minhwa."

"Yes, Team Leader?"

"Shall we eat some bread?"

He was subtly telling her that she should go and buy some for him.

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Woosh!

Minhyuk opened his eyes as the capsule slowly opened. By the time the capsule fully opened, he was already outside in his room.

His medical team had required him to take a thirty-minute break for every four hours of gameplay. This was so that the team could monitor his health, as well as for him to eat and appease his hunger in reality.

He could already feel the pangs of hunger in his stomach the moment he stepped out of the game. However, he could see the entire medical staff staring at him attentively and waiting for some sort of reaction from him.

"H, how was it?"

"Were you able to eat something?"

"Yes..."

Minhyuk was sullen as he accepted the box of cherry tomatoes handed to him. He looked at the box with contempt and disgust as if he was looking at bitter medicine.

"So, why do you look so disappointed?"

"Because I can't eat it right now."

Minhyuk munched on his cherry tomatoes as he answered them in disappointment. But...

Giggle!

Everyone chuckled at him.

"It was really delicious..." Minhyuk mumbled.

"What did you eat?" Oh Changwook asked him curiously. He wondered what Minhyuk ate for him to feel that sullen and disappointed with the cherry tomatoes.

"It was hard bread."

The people who played Athenae among the medical staff immediately felt their faces freeze the moment they heard Minhyuk's words.

Hard bread? That tasteless and dry bread? That bread that those poor and broke novices endure and eat to satisfy their fullness stat? That was the delicious food that he was talking about?

Everyone knew that his reaction to the food was weird. However, looking at it through Minhyuk's perspective made them understand his thoughts to some extent.

"I can go back in after the thirty-minute break, right?" Minhyuk turned to Jinhwan, waiting for an answer to his question.

"That's right."

This was his first access to the game. So far, they had not yet seen any abnormalities in his condition after he logged out of the game. But they could definitely see some change in Minhyuk...

"I want to go back in quickly and eat those loaves of hard bread~"

Minhyuk was all smiles now. Seeing him like this made Jinhwan smile wryly. He had never seen Minhyuk like this over the long years of treatment that he accompanied him with.

'We have never seen him smile like this before.'

Everyone saw Minhyuk as a cheerful and energetic person. He was someone who never lost his smile despite being afflicted by this rare illness. However, most of the smiles and laughter that he had shown to people were a front so he could get out of an awkward situation or to stop them from worrying over him.

However, right now, they could see that Minhyuk was truly smiling.

'For Minhyuk, more than anything, true happiness means eating.'

Jinhwan shook his head and cleared the depressing thoughts in his mind.

"Ah! Minhyuk, you've cleared the hunting tutorial and officially entered the novice zone right?"

"Nope. I'm actually still hitting the scarecrow."

"What?!" Oh Changwook unknowingly raised his voice in surprise.

The scarecrow-hitting quest was a quest that could be completed in an hour. That was why he reacted like that.

Minhyuk had no other choice but to narrate what he had done and experienced so far to clear their confusion.

"...Is that so?"

What a strange way of playing games. He wanted to eat more bread so he kept on hitting the scarecrow?

For a semi-ranker like Changwook, something like that was completely incomprehensible.

Playing games is supposed to be about leveling up and gaining skills, right?

"It looks like you'll take a little while longer before you get to the novice zone, huh?"

"You're absolutely correct. General, sir!"

"Hey...!!" Oh Changwook grimaced.

Minhyuk quickly grabbed his mobile phone as he munched on his cherry tomatoes and salad.

He went to Athenae's official homepage and searched for 'Things to eat in Ardo.' in preparation for his entry to the novice zone. For regular users, it was an extremely unusual thing to search for.

Minhyuk browsed the search results keenly.

[Guys, have you tried eating the bark of the pine trees in Ardo? It tastes so frickin good!

—MyPooColor: He's doing it again... Last time his character ate weeds and died hahahahahaha

—Wonderboy: Attention seeker hahaha. I'll recommend a recipe to you, mix rice and horse poop. Give it a try. Lmao.

—DaddyKong: Mr. Wonder, he might really do it...

Minhyuk realized that it did not matter whether it was in reality or inside the game, there would always be strange people.

Minhyuk continued to scroll down as he looked through the posts, when his hands suddenly stopped at one post in particular.

'T, this is it...!'

He read the contents of the post with rapt attention. His body started to tremble from the shocking contents of the post.

"Hey! what's wrong with you...!"

"Mi... Minhyuk! Don't tell me that his body still can't cope without eating for four hours?!"

All of the medical staff were suddenly in an uproar, but Minhyuk shook his head calmly and smiled at them to reassure them.

"I, it's not what you think..."

"...Then?" Changwook asked worriedly.

"If I finish attacking the scarecrows and exit the training grounds, I can find chickens!"

"Ah, chicken? They're easy to catch. You can just hit them a few times and they'll die. They're really just there for you to practice hunting before you go out and hunt monsters for real."

That was not important. What was important was... Chicken! What kind of an existence chicken was, it was something that Minhyuk knew well.

"Chicken tastes delicious whether it's roasted, fried or boiled!"

"Ah..."

Everyone reacted at the same time. They finally understood why he reacted like that.

But Minhyuk was currently in a huge predicament.

'But right now...'

I still want to eat bread.

He still wanted to eat a lot of bread so he was a bit conflicted about what he should do. However, he made up his mind.

'I still want to eat more bread.'

He could eat chicken anytime he wanted, but decided to focus on bread first. He had no idea if he was feeling this way because he had not eaten bread in a long time, but he really wanted to eat more.

Minhyuk was a stubborn and persistent person. He would not stop until he finished what he set his mind on. This was also the same reason why he was able to top the CSAT and why he could excel in all of the endeavors that he dipped his feet in.

'That's right, cold noodle soup and eggs will be the finale.'

He would be one of those few people who ate cold noodle soup and eggs as the finale.

Yeah, save the best for last!

But there was still one thing that was bothering him.

'You can't just catch a chicken and eat it alive right?'

He didn't have any equipment and utensils.

Minhyuk pondered deeply on how he could acquire the proper utensils and equipment as he scrolled through the forums. It took a while, but he was able to think of a brilliant idea.

Just then, the name of the NPC that Minhyuk thought of popped up in the forums. It came up as a related search entry while he was browsing the internet. The article was titled 'Ardo's Instructor, Valen'. Curious, he clicked on the topic. However, what greeted him were posts filled with grievances and discontent.

Minhyuk clicked on one and started reading.

[Ardo's scarecrow instructor Valen is so scary and unfriendly...?So scary,?having to strike 50 times is already hard enough and I only get bread and bottled water but he

even threw it at me and gave me a disgusted look... I mean why do you have to throw it at me, he's such a jerk! Aren't the users king? Why is this NPC like this?]

—KingtoMan: ...? The problem is probably with your personality. Are you like this even in your daily life? NPCs are like humans too. If you treated him nicely, won't he treat you the same way?

—SailorTop: Instructor Valen is famous for being unfriendly. If I were you, you should have looked for the meaning of 'manner maketh man.' haha. You're lucky you've just started.

—iLuvSpinningWheels: It's true that Instructor Valen is a bit strict... But if you welcome beginners who talk and look down on you every day then you would also be very annoyed...

'Hmm?'

Minhyuk couldn't understand what they were talking about in the comments.

Instructor?Valen? But the man is very kind and friendly?

Minhyuk nodded repeatedly at the thought. In fact, he wanted to pay Valen back for all of the kindness that he had shown him during his stay in the training grounds. After all, Minhyuk was his father's son and he would always follow the things that his father had taught him.

Don't take advantage of the kindness of others and don't neglect the weak.

The situation with Valen was the same.

Despite staying at home, Minhyuk's father had always made sure that he received the best education. That was why he wanted to do his best and show the world that his father taught him well.

Minhyuk switched to another site after checking all of the information about Instructor Valen on Athenae's homepage. This time, he went to the site where he could find all of the information that he needed in the world...Navar.

What he wanted to do was to eat bread that tasted even better than the bread that he was currently eating. So, he searched for 'hard bread recipes' in Navar.

In fact, Minhyuk was not all that good at cooking. It was not because he was not able to try his hand at it... it was because he always ended up eating the ingredients while attempting to make the food! He even gained a lot of weight just because he wanted to give cooking a try.

But inside the game? He might be able to finally cook.

"I'm going back inside."

"Are you going to eat chicken?"

"No, no. I'm going to eat bread."

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"Why?"

"No pain, no gain. I have to eat something delicious after working so hard."

Minhyuk swaggered back to the capsule, leaving those words behind.

"I don't understand. If it was me, I'd go out and eat chicken right away."

"Haha, I can understand Minhyuk's feelings." Jinhwan smiled at Changwook.

"You understand him, Doc?"

"Think about it. There are two kinds of people that go to buffets. One is there to eat a lot of different things while the other is there to focus on one dish, in order to appreciate the quality and taste of that dish. Isn't Minhyuk the latter?"

"Ah..."

"It's been years since he last had bread, he probably wants to eat like crazy until he gets sick of it."

Jinhwan looked at Changwook and stood up.

"Do you understand it now, General?"

"Ah... ah... arghh...! Kang Minhyuk, this is your fault!"

Oh Changwook was likely going to flail around in his bed whenever he recalled this shameful and embarrassing scene.

1. eating broadcast