

Gourmet Gaming

Chapter 5: Garlic Bread and Soup

Minhyuk was greeted with a familiar scene the moment he re-entered the game. He could see Instructor Valen wearing a bored look as he watched the players hit the scarecrows. His dreary expression immediately lifted when he saw Minhyuk coming over.

"Oh, you're here."

"Yes, Instructor!" Minhyuk gripped his small wooden sword and answered loudly.

"I'll continue to work hard in swinging my sword!"

"Aren't you working hard because you want to eat? Hahahaha!" Instructor Valen laughed heartily.

He looked extremely good when he smiled. It made Minhyuk wonder why those users were dissing him on the internet.

'A person who smiles like this has a bad personality?'

Minhyuk walked towards the scarecrows with doubt lingering in his head.

By now, he had already received the bread reward for a total of 11 times. He even increased his STR by two points. Still, Minhyuk swung his sword again to get more bread.

Slash!

Slash!

While he was busy swinging his sword...

"I'm done. Give it to me."

He heard the jarring voice of another player. However, before the player could finish his words...

Thud.

A loud sound rang out in the training grounds. It was the sound of something, probably the reward bag, getting thrown on the ground.

"Right. Get lost, then."

"Are you looking down on me? You?! An NPC?!?Huh?!"

There were a lot of strange people in this world. Many would lash out on NPCs as a dealing mechanism for their inferiority complexes. These people just had to let others know that they have been looked down upon, without accepting the fact that they also looked down on others.

There was nothing more shameful and ironic than this attitude.

"You looked down on me first so I returned the favor. Do you have any problems with that?"

"What?! You son of a..."

"Shut your trap and get lost."

Valen's voice was borderline murderous. It sounded so cold and frosty that anyone who heard it would feel a chill run down their spines.

The player gulped in fright, "I... I'll kill you next time! You better watch out!"

Valen scoffed loudly.

As he was eavesdropping, a thought flashed in Minhyuk's mind.

'It's a bit refreshing, isn't it?'

'Hearing the words of the instructor somehow makes me feel refreshed and free.'

He swung his sword for another fifty times, got rewarded with bread, ate it with relish, and began swinging his sword again. Minhyuk repeated this routine even after the sun had started to set.

Time in Athenae flowed three times faster than in the real world.

Minhyuk kept on going until the day had completely ended. After completing the current set, he checked his status and saw that his STR had increased again by another point. However, he also saw something strange.

(Minhyuk)

Level: 1

Class: None

HP: 59?MP: 10

STR: 9??AGI: 5 ?STM: 5

WIS: 5 ?INT: 5

Fullness: 100%/2 Ne/w novel chapters are published on no/vel(/bin(.).co/m

Bonus Point: 0

'Huh?'

'A /2 has shown up in my fullness stat.'

Minhyuk immediately rushed to Instructor Valen.

"Instructor, there's a figure and the number 2 that showed up after my 100% fullness stat, do you know what it means?"

"Hmmm...?I'm sorry but I too, don't know what it is."

"Ah...?I see. I understand, thank you, Instructor!"

Minhyuk thought that the NPCs would know everything about the game, but it seemed like that was not the case at all. However, it was not something bad. In fact, it was one of the advantages of?Athenae?as a game. After all, having to travel far and wide to learn more about things made the experience all the more exciting and mysterious.

Minhyuk sat down and started to eat his bread while checking?Athenae's official homepage?for more information. Thankfully, the official homepage could be accessed even when the player was inside the game. He searched for the '/' after the fullness stat. After searching for a while, he was able to find something about it.

[A /1 appeared right after my fullness stat, does anyone know what this means?

—PororoGum: Your character will be deleted in one hour, yep, yep.

—thisisrigged: What does it mean?

—ieatwell: I know about this. It's when your fullness has reached 100% but you still continue to eat food. Getting this /1 is not easy, you must have been eating really well. Take a picture of your hands as proof, go!]

"Ah..."

Minhyuk understood it now. His fullness was at 100% but since he continued to eat, a figure appeared right next to the fullness stat. If he continued, then, the number would increase even further. He was not aware of it earlier because he would only open his stats window whenever his stats increased. For all he knew, the "/2" after the fullness stat might have already been there for a long time.

He kept on searching for more information before coming to a conclusion.

'I guess it's not that big of a deal, huh?'

The highest number he saw was a /5 reported by another player. Since nothing strange had happened to that player, Minhyuk thought that it would be fine. So, he threw all ?thought out of his mind and resumed swinging his sword.

Once again, he received another set of rewards.

[You have achieved 1000 strikes on the scarecrow.]

[You have acquired the title 'This Zone's Strong Guy'.]

[You have gained 1 reputation point.]

"I, Instructor!" Minhyuk immediately called out to Valen.

"What's the matter?"

"I... I got the title 'This?Zone's?Strong Guy'."

"Co, congratulations!"

Valen was wrought with joy when he heard Minhyuk's words. It was as if he was the one who got the title, not Minhyuk, with how happy he looked.

"Titles can be acquired in a variety of ways. A single person can get many titles. These titles can be split into two big categories; ?common, and unique titles."

Minhyuk listened attentively.

"Common titles are titles that any player can obtain while unique titles are special titles that can only be obtained when a player becomes the first person to achieve a specific milestone. The rewards for the latter are especially good. The 'This Zone's Strong Guy'?is a title under the common title category." Instructor Valen told Minhyuk this information with a satisfied smile. "You can also check your titles by thinking or saying it out loud."

Minhyuk checked the details of the title immediately.

(This Zone's Strong Guy)

Common Title

Title Effect: +5 to all five basic stats

"Oh..."

Minhyuk quickly checked his stats after seeing the effect of the title.

Level: 1

Class: None

HP: 114?MP: 100

STR: 9+5??AGI: 5+5 ?STM: 5+5

WIS: 5+5 ?INT: 5+5?Rep: 1

Fullness: 100%/2

Bonus Point: 0

An increase in level?would give a player five bonus stat points. Right now, Minhyuk's stats looked similar to someone who had leveled up five times.

I only swung my sword so I?could?eat a lot!

"Well, you must have seen that your reputation increased. If you have the reputation stat, then your favor with the other guardians will also increase a bit. In the future, when making a deal with them, you will be able to buy items at a cheaper price, or sell your items to them at a higher price. Furthermore, once your reputation reaches a certain level, you will obtain an additional point in your magic defense."

"What is magic defense?"

"It's an unmarked stat, and it refers to your power to defend against magic. You don't necessarily have it right now. Any unmarked stat will be marked once you receive it, understand?"

"Ah, I see. Thank you."

Minhyuk happily gobbled up his bread before hitting the scarecrows again.

'I can feel that my body has changed now due to the rise in my stats the title!'

"Wow..."

"He.. he's freaking strong!"

The surrounding users exclaimed in surprise.

It had been an hour after all, and they were all novice players with the same stats, but Minhyuk was the only one who could finish the hitting quest at twice the normal speed. They were all stunned at the display of his shocking power.

All of this was observed by Instructor Valen, who had a gratified smile on his face.

Night finally arrived.

Instructor Valen had once again given a powerful blow to a user that tried to pick a fight against him, sending him away.

'Phew... I'm tired.'

This was his routine every single day. So far, there had been no deviation yet.

'It's almost time for my shift to end...'

Valen worked twelve hours each day. Another staff member would then arrive to take over the night shift. Right on time, the staff arrived to relieve him.

"Good job, Instructor Valen. You can go and take a rest now."

"It will probably be hard on you."

Valen saw Minhyuk diligently eating his bread when he turned around.

'It would be nice if he's here tomorrow too...'

'The past two days were truly enjoyable.'

Minhyuk, a young man who was happy even with just a piece of bread, could make anyone who saw him smile. It had been a joy for Valen.

Valen turned around to leave with those thoughts in his head to accompany him home.

"Instructor."

Minhyuk quickly kept his sword and approached Valen.

"Huh?"

"Hehe, are you getting off of work now?"

"That's right."

"By any chance... Have you eaten already?"

"Not yet. I'll eat when I get home."

'Of course he hadn't eaten yet.'

Minhyuk knew this but still asked.

"Theeeeeeen..."

"...It's fine, you can say it."

"I'd like to make you a delicious dinner, Instructor!"

"Hmm? A delicious dinner?"

Valen stopped in his tracks. No player had offered anything like that before, and there had been no player brave enough to ask to visit his house.

"Yes!"

Minhyuk had already planned everything in his head.

'There's no way I can obtain any utensils and equipment right now, so the only way I can make a delicious meal out of hard bread is to borrow the Instructor's kitchen! And, if we get even closer, I could probably borrow those items once I get out of here.'

Of course it would not be for free. After all, he offered to cook a meal for him.

"Would you really do that?" Instructor Valen asked as he roared with laughter. He could already tell what was on Minhyuk's mind.

"Boy."

"Yes!"

"You just want to eat something delicious, right?" Valen asked him with a smirk.

Pang!

"N... Not at all! I really want the Instructor to eat something delicious!"

"Hahaha, you! You'll probably fill a river with how much drool is dripping from your mouth! Let's go."

Valen relented. The two men walked away together in high spirits, looking forward to a scrumptious meal ahead.

Valen's house was close by. It was a small and shabby cabin located just opposite of the scarecrow training grounds.

'However small the cabin is, there's something inside it for sure. An oven, a pot or anything that could make fire.'

"Isn't this cozy?"

"It's cozy. In fact, I'll be okay with it as long as there's no mold growing inside."

Valen smiled wryly when he saw Minhyuk looking around in the kitchen.

'Has anyone ever been here before?'

Valen always went straight home after a hard day's work. He would then take a shower, read a book, before falling asleep. The next day, he would wake up, go to work, and the cycle repeated. This was how his days usually went by. He had always been 'alone'.

There were only two NPCs stationed at the scarecrow training grounds. One for the day shift and one for the night. There were always plenty of players who tried flattering in order to get close to them. Such players usually did it in hopes of getting more rewards. However, none of them had asked to visit his home.

'So what if it's just so you could eat something delicious.'

Instructor Valen liked Minhyuk. This was the first in a long time that he felt such warmth. He was willing to let Minhyuk get close to him if it meant that he could continue to feel that warmth.

"Hmm? Are these the only ingredients you have?"

Minhyuk arranged the ingredients and frowned. He thought there would be plenty of ingredients but what Valen had was a bit shabby.

"The guardians of Athenae get the same food every day. You can go to town and buy other food and necessities, but I don't think it's necessary."

It's comfortable eating alone.

Valen smiled bitterly after those words.

When Valen was referring to the guardians of Athenae, what he meant were the NPCs. Minhyuk's eyes widened with his words. It seemed like his instructor was living a life of loneliness and hardships.

The only ingredients he had were the hard bread that Minhyuk ate, and some additional ingredients to make soup. Those were the only things that he had available.

'Well... No matter how high the quality of the game, it's still just a game.'

It would be strange if they gave the NPCs a different meal every day.

Minhyuk rolled his sleeves and prepared to cook.

"I'll definitely make you a really delicious meal!"

"I'm looking forward to it."

Minhyuk smiled confidently.

"By the way, there's a lot of bread in here ... Can I eat some while I cook?"

The loaves of hard bread were piled up like a mountain in one corner of the room. Of course, Minhyuk would drool over them.

"Help yourself."

Valen smiled when he saw the greedy look on Minhyuk's face, who had proceeded to spread out all of the ingredients on top of the kitchen counter.

Minhyuk had memorized a lot of recipes about hard bread earlier, but half of them could not be utilized at the moment. He had to find something he could make with the ingredients on hand.

Then...

'Ah... That's it...!'

Hard bread, garlic, butter, honey, condensed milk, and parsley, with these, I can make that!

He could make garlic bread.

"I'll go and wash up."

"Yes!"

"Well, don't work yourself too hard."

"Of course."

Valen entered the washroom with a grin.

"Yummy~"

Minhyuk ate a piece of bread before starting to cook.