

Overgeared 1061

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“These jerks.”

Between level 398 and 399, it might only be a one-level difference, but the experience required to level up was at least twice as much. Grid had speculated this. However, he was mistaken as it wasn't twice as much, but 10 times as much. It had been a fortnight since he had gotten stuck in the Ruins of the War God. Apart from when he visited Reidan for the Ultimate Transformation, Grid had hunted continuously, yet he had only gained 0.09% experience. Since the Ruins of the War God was currently the most difficult hunting site, this wasn't a natural phenomenon.

‘It is because it is like this that I couldn't level up by hunting Berith. Shouldn't I level up at this point?’

Grid was well aware of his own strength. He knew he was much stronger if his level was equal to that of an ordinary ranker. Could other people fulfill the demanding experience requirement when they didn't have overwhelming hunting abilities? Grid thought it was hard.

‘In a year or so, there might be a perception that level 399 is an interval level.’

There would be a period when most users were stuck at level 399. Thinking about it, Grid realized how precious a quest which gave levels truly was. At this time, the minus levels he experienced when he just became Pagma's Descendant was more precious.

“It's hard, it's hard...”

Grid was suddenly overwhelmed. He thought the operators would be giggling while watching him be in pain, and they would do it while ripping at fried chicken.

‘...No, even they aren't perverted enough to watch while ripping at friend chicken.’

While Grid was shivering, a whisper came. The whim of the war god was still maintained, so the ruins didn't restrict communication or magic transfers.

-Grid, Grid! I've received a request for a quest that looks good!

-Oh, really? Congratulations.

-I can do this with Grid!

-With me? Is it a cooperative quest?

Grid was intrigued by Coke's whisper. He wasn't curious about the contents of the quest but the rewards. If it was an experience quest, then he wanted to participate in any way.

-What are the quest rewards?

-One unique rated skillbook! Coke shouted confidently.

It was a chance to earn a unique rated skill! For Coke, it was a dream come true, and he thought Grid would be happy. However, Grid didn't have a very excited response.

-Is that all?

-Ah, no! It also gives a title! We can obtain an affinity with someone!

-...

During the time he investigated the Overgeared Guild, the high ranking players had an average of 12 titles. On the other hand, Grid had overcome all types of trials and had more than 30 titles. Additionally, most of his titles were superb. He didn't have much expectation for a new title. The thing that interested him was affinity with someone.

-Affinity with who?

-I want to know that too...

-Our Coke has grown a lot~ He can joke around now~

-It also increases the level!!

-Where's our pretty one?

In the capital of the Overgeared Kingdom, Reinhardt...

"It is suspicious in many ways," Lael responded in an uncertain manner. "Who would share a hidden quest with someone whose face they don't know? I think there is more than a 99% chance of it being a trap or a prank."

"Rash Guard is a senior member who has been active on the Chivalry site for over 15 years, and he usually behaves very well. I don't think his credibility is low."

"Look, Coke. Do you think the Internet is a good space? Additionally, how great is the website called Chivalry that 15 years of activity can be an indicator of trust?"

"Chivalry is a community site where knight enthusiasts come together to discuss knights. There is a 20-year tradition..."

"It is a place where you just gather. Half of the medieval knights were ruffians who plundered the people to live or bragged whenever they opened their mouths."

"Prime Minister Lael!! Those words are overkill!"

"No, I'm not talking about Satisfy's knight players but medieval knights."

"Do you know Jude? You are mocking knights right now!"

"Hey, don't fight. Just calm down," Grid, who was listening quietly, calmed the situation. He had a slightly different idea from Lael, who did not trust the unidentified informant.

"Lael, you are talking curtly because I know that you're worried about us. However, your suspicion is a bit wrong. Is there anyone in the world who would share a hidden quest with a person whose face they don't know? It is possible if you don't have any friends."

“...”

It was a cheap and low sensibility. Grid once had no friends and fully understood the position of Rash Guard.

“There is a quest that requires two more people to clear, but you don’t have any friends. What do you do then? You have to find people on the Internet.”

“...It is a possibility.”

“Let’s go quickly. It is better to get together first to find out if the quest is true or not.”

“In any case, it could be a trap so be careful.”

“I’ll block him if I feel it is fishy.”

“I understand. Request to be that person’s friend and set your level and affiliation to open mode. I think it is better to naturally encourage them to reveal their level and affiliation.”

It was a process to determine if they were a trustworthy person. The convinced Grid nodded and sent a friend request to ‘Resh##3.’

##3 meant he was the third person to create that username. Out of two billion players, there would be thousands or tens of thousands of Resh. Being third meant he was an early player. It was as expected.

Name: Resh

Level: 363

Affiliation: None

“High ranker Resh!”

Coke was stunned when he saw Resh’s information on his friend’s list. Lauel watched from the side and was somewhat surprised. Only Grid was bewildered.

“Why? Who is it?”

“He has been in the top 1,000 rankings for five years. He has never appeared in public and hasn’t done any guild activities. Thus, everything is veiled, but his name is one of the best.

“Five years?”

Everyone would suffer twists and turns. As long as they weren’t a genius like Kraugel or the Overgeared members, even the most outstanding person would suffer a drop in the rankings. It was great to maintain a steady top ranking for five years despite all the competitors.

“Wow, Resh is Korean.” Coke was a bit excited. It seemed he had been interested in Resh for a while.

Lauel’s doubtful and distrusting attitude softened further. “I think you can make contact. He is someone with a lot to lose and is less likely to set a trap for Your Majesty.”

The capital of the Saharan Empire, Titan—Grid and Coke met Resh here and were amazed. They never dreamed that Resh would be a knight of the second imperial prince. The player must've accumulated a lot of achievements to be promoted to a position directly under an imperial prince.

"I was actually a bit hesitant... Then I remembered that Grid has a close relationship with the dukes, and this gave me courage," Resh said everything honestly.

This quest was inside the empire. He was very concerned if he should cooperate with the Overgeared King—the king of a kingdom they were at war with. However, his worries only lasted a short time. During the Berith raid, Grid had shown off his friendship with the empire's dukes.

"This... The situation is serious." Grid felt uneasy after he received the quest information and grasped the full story. The dukes he thought would improve the relationship between the empire and the Overgeared Kingdom were currently in crisis. In the worst case, the emperor might persecute the dukes without wanting to improve relations with the Overgeared Kingdom.

Resh comforted him, "A few days before the dukes arrived, the emperor had already left the capital. It is extremely unlikely that the emperor is behind this. There is only one suspect, 4th Imperial Prince Edan."

"Hmm..."

Edan—he was the son of Empress Marie, who brainwashed Asmophel and demonized Piaro as a traitor. Grid gritted his teeth. 'They are in a crisis because of me.'

It seemed to be due to Piaro's exposure. Edan must have felt a sense of crisis and handled the dukes in the emperor's absence.

'I think it will be serious if the Yatan Essence comes out here.'

One of the most fraudulent items in Satisfy was the Yatan Essence. The Yatan Essence showed the ability to destroy personality using the power of the evil god. Grid had already seen the power of the Yatan Essence through the Asmophel and elf episodes.

'Empress Marie is in partnership with the Yatan Church. It isn't strange if Prince Edan also has the Yatan Essence.'

He needed to hurry. If the dukes were brainwashed by the Yatan Essence like Asmophel in the past, the situation would become twisted.

"Let's enter the Abyss straight away."

Now Grid didn't care about the quest rewards. As king of the Overgeared Kingdom and friend of the dukes, he felt a sense of obligation.

"We have to rescue the dukes before it is too late."

"Our mission isn't to rescue the dukes but to secure a list of prisoners."

"If we rescue the dukes, we'll get the list."

“...” Resh’s eyes looked shaken. The fact that Grid’s greatest potential was his ‘human network’ was already famous, but Resh had thought there were many exaggerated parts. Most celebrities were less than what was portrayed in the media, and he thought Grid would be the same.

However, this wasn’t the case. Grid was helping NPCs out of personal friendship. He was going into danger for enemy nobles. For Grid, the value of friendship was the beautiful concept that was seen in movies.

‘There is a reason why those talents trust and follow him absolutely.’

Resh saw Coke, the young ranker who was serving respectfully behind Grid, and his forgotten passion was ignited.

“I understand. My lord will also be delighted if the dukes are rescued. I will cooperate actively.”

The empire’s worst dungeon, the Abyss, was so deep and huge that it couldn’t be measured. The reason why the continent was split in half was that a huge meteorite had fallen down here. There were such doubts, and the dark tunnel stimulated human fear to the limit. Perhaps that was why there were no signs of life around it.

“A tunnel that exists in the wilderness. There are no outside guards because no one bothers to visit this place.”

“There is a reason why no one is here. I shiver just getting close.” Coke trembled. He wasn’t joking around. He was really scared.

Grid slapped him on the back. “Straighten your spirit. It isn’t a place to let down your guard.”

In fact, his transcendent status was making itself known.

[Your intuition senses danger.]

[Caution is required when acting.]

Wouldn’t it be better to summon colleagues now? It was a notification window that caused him to worry. Nevertheless, Grid didn’t act rashly. The quest was limited to three people. There might be system constraints if the number of people was exceeded.

“There is a story that the bottom of the Abyss is another world. It is a place that is in contact with hell and infested with demonic energy. I heard that non-human existences are guarding the inside, and there is a high possibility of a difficult battle. I wish you good luck and will take the lead.”

Resh didn’t delay any further. He didn’t forget that he was the subject of the quest and took the lead to enter. Darkness encroached on the group’s vision.

In the evening, the celestial palace made of mysterious timber and stone started to emit brilliant colors. It was shining brightly enough to break the boundary between night and day. This was the palace of the grandmaster, and it was splendid and magnificent.

“Is this an opportunity to get a peek at the answer?”

There was a subtle interest in the eyes of Grandmaster Zikfrector as he observed the magic crystal. In the crystal ball, the image of Overgeared King Grid in the Abyss spread out like a video.

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“It is a very elaborate map...”

This was Resh’s impression. Grid and Coke also agreed.

Satisfy was a world that boasted a size comparable to Earth’s. There were many elaborate places in Satisfy, but the quality of the Abyss was special. Unlike other existing places where the geological and physical phenomena were expressed by the line, ‘99.9% realistic while the atmosphere and phenomenon were somewhat exaggerated’, the Abyss was 100% consistent with reality. The smell, shape, color, texture, physical phenomena, and climate changes, and so on...

Everything was extremely realistic. It was so realistic that it was hard to distinguish between the virtual world and reality, making it feel creepy. Unlike normal maps, there was no BGM, and this enhanced the feeling even further.

‘I always had this thought, but isn’t Chairman Lim Cheolho an alien as rumored?’

Water droplets flowed down the cracked stone walls, and dripping sounds echoed throughout the place. It was inconvenient to move in the Abyss because the rocks were carved in all forms and bulged out everywhere, representing the traces of time. The Abyss wasn’t a straight line underground. As they descended, the inside became as complicated as a labyrinth, and the ceiling seemed to cover the sunlight.

“I’m nervous,” Coke’s voice shook as his pupils reflected the darkness that didn’t allow him to see beyond a meter’s distance. His feelings of nervousness didn’t seem exaggerated.

Grid scolded him, “Didn’t you go to the army? Front-line troops like me were fighting each other every day in the tunnel, and I had to get used to this atmosphere.”

“Were you on the front lines? Sure enough, Grid was great since the army...”

“It’s a lie.”

Talking about the army in the game—this conversation was possible because they were South Korean men. Players from other countries wouldn’t talk about the army so naturally. They had been to a dungeon more than once or twice and would’ve brought up a dialogue suitable for game play. The problem was that the three people gathered here were Koreans.

Resh felt a strange sense of belonging and started to participate in the conversation, “Just because you weren’t on the front lines doesn’t mean you can’t be proud. I was from the XX division. We had many things to be vigilant about and received less training than rear troops.”

“Instead, you take on risks.”

“There are pros and cons to each, but we should all be proud.”

Was this a game or reality? Was it the Abyss or the army? In the midst of the stories about reserve forces and civil defense forces, Grid's shoulders trembled slightly. The average person was more afraid of people than ghosts, but Grid was different. He could beat people with force, but he had no solutions when it came to encountering ghosts.

Grid had peeked at Khan's ancestral ghosts in the past and was still afraid of ghosts. He couldn't show it because of his constitution, but from his point of view, the atmosphere of the Abyss was so creepy that it wouldn't be strange for ghosts to pop out straight away.

Of course, Coke and Resh didn't notice that Grid was scared. They knew that Grid was the strongest person in the world. He was the majestic Overgeared King. They couldn't imagine that he was a coward.

"Our light stone is working well." Grid sought to dispel his fear, so he released his tension by talking about the light elemental that revolved around him and illuminated his way.

Resh stared at the light elemental. "The majority of Overgeared members are in possession of an elemental. Did you get help from Great Sage Sticks?"

"No. He might be great but it isn't enough to give the guild members elementals."

"Then you have been blessed by the world tree?"

"Yes, do you know about the elementals?"

It wasn't strange for the intelligence network of a high ranker to know about Sage Sticks. After all, Great Sage Sticks was a famous person. However, shouldn't there only be a few high rankers who knew about the blessing of the world tree? Resh's intelligence network was amazing considering the fact that the forest of the world tree was inaccessible to humans. Resh replied humbly, "I'm well informed. Since I am in the palace, I often hear rumors and gained a bit of superficial knowledge."

Grid nodded in understanding.

"Um..." However, Coke was different. He wondered if this was an opportunity to get some information out of Resh. "What is Prince Dulandal's character like?"

"He is a bit selfish, and he is hot-blooded because he lacks patience. At the same time, he knows how to take care of the people below him."

"I guess the level of the prince should be extremely high?"

"Um... It is a similar level to the dukes."

"Wow, so strong?"

"Having the same level doesn't mean the skills are the same. In fact, I've never seen him fight before, but he doesn't look that strong. However, it is said that 1st Prince Roland and 4th Prince Edan are so strong it is hard to find adversaries for them in the empire."

"...!" Coke was greatly startled.

This meant at least two of the imperial princes were comparable to the dukes...? They had been born with a golden spoon in their mouths and had grown up comfortably, so he thought they would be lazy

and wouldn't have good personal skills. Resh smiled. "The princes live a life filled with competition. In particular, the eldest prince has brothers who want to ascend the throne, and it is unknown what his future will be like..."

"Why are you so surprised? The more special the NPCs, the stronger their armed forces are. It is no wonder that they are strong. The emperor is probably greater," Grid told the briefly surprised Coke.

Coke repeated his habitual, "As expected of Grid."

Then he continued to ask questions, "What do Dulandal and the imperial family think of our Overgeared Kingdom?"

Now, he had cut to the chase, but the moment that Coke's eyes shone...

"I can't talk about that," Resh interrupted the questions. "I'm deeply grateful to be helped by the two of you and I'm willing to do my best since I'm a fan of Grid, but I don't want to do something that will cause problems. Please understand."

"Yes, of course. I naturally understand. I was too excited that I forgot about Resh's position. I'm really sorry."

"You don't have to apologize," Resh responded to Coke with a smile.

Grid watched the two of them and grasped the situation in hindsight, 'Coke was trying to extract information.'

He could acquire a monster's skill by ingesting the corpse of a monster he hunted. This was one of Coke's basic characteristics. It was the source that allowed him to grow rapidly under the training of the 10 meritorious retainers. His existence itself was that of a carnivore. In fact, he was very strong. By the way, he also seemed to have a wise side.

'He is a versatile talent.'

Grid's heart felt full. It felt like he had picked out the highest rated card when playing a mobile game. He was filled with joy and happiness.

'Ah.'

He realized that the shaking of his body had disappeared. He was no longer afraid of the atmosphere of the Abyss where it wouldn't be strange if ghosts popped up. This was the power of a human. Grid patted the shoulder of Coke, who was greatly embarrassed and apologetic. "Cute guy. It seems to be starting from now on, so raise your spirits."

"Ah, yep!"

Certainly, when walking deeper underground, some foreign objects started to stand out. It was an artificial trail. There were old steel bars. They had been installed in the small spaces that occurred naturally throughout the stone walls, turning them into 'prisons.'

"From here on out is the real Abyss," Grid confirmed from the warning windows which kept appearing more frequently as he held the Sword Aiming at the Gods in his hands. The reason he didn't bring out

the Enlightenment Sword was that the place was narrow. The chain explosion of the black flames could collapse the inner walls of the tunnel and crush them to death.

Suddenly, there was an uncomfortable friction sound ringing out from beyond the darkness that wasn't touched by the elemental's light. There was a noise like a thick chain being dragged across the ground.

"It's coming," Grid's words caused Coke to shake off his tension and pull out his sword and shield. Around the time he became Prince Lord's knight, Grid had made him battle gear. Unfortunately, the sword's rating stayed at unique, but the shield's rating was legendary. Coke didn't care about the rating. The essence was that it contained Grid's skill and effort. The enhancement figure was even +8. Coke had used all his assets to enhance it with the determination that he would use it for years and years.

'It is truly the Overgeared Guild.' Resh glimpsed the value of Coke's items and realized the power of the Overgeared Guild.

The Overgeared Guild controlled high-level hunting grounds, raided all types of boss monsters, and secured valuable production materials. Then the legendary blacksmith Grid designed and produced items using the materials they supplied. The result that was produced transcended common sense. The armed state of the Overgeared Guild was close to the ideals of the high rankers including Resh, so the Overgeared Guild was naturally strong.

'Still...'

Step. Resh stepped in front of Grid. Grid might be stronger than Resh, but he was still only a helper. Since Resh was the subject of the quest, it was right for him to stand in front. It was a risk he had to take. Resh thought like this.

"Let me first assess the difficulty."

Then it happened the moment that Resh spoke. The sound of the chains being pulled accelerated, and two human figures appeared in the darkness. They were imperial soldiers named 'polluted guards.' No, they were monsters. Although they were armed with armor and swords etched with the symbol of the empire, they couldn't be considered human. Their skin was melting like mucus, and poison spewed from their mouths. The sound of clanking chains was actually coming from cracks in their necks.

Resh blocked the swords of two prisoners while simultaneously penetrating the abdomen of one of the guards by aiming his sword under the shield. Grid was amazed by the single motion that defended and counterattacked. "A skill?"

"No, it is a basic technique," Coke explained. "The biggest strength of classes that use shields is that as long as the damage received doesn't exceed the level of the shield, we can defend and counterattack at the same time."

"Then why does Vantner only defend?"

"Ah... It is a very difficult technique. Depending on the strength of the opponent, the probability of a successful counterattack will be reduced."

"Ohu."

It was almost always a raid when Grid fought in a party with Vantner. Boss monsters were generally transcendent, so the success rate of Vantner's counterattack success was low.

"There is a 40% counterattack success rate against same-level monsters. Of course, this is a story based on me."

"What?"

40% success against the same level monsters...? Then what about that person? Grid was at a loss for words. Resh blocked the attacks of the guards and succeeded in counterattacking at the same time. His success rate was as high as 70%. Most surprisingly, the levels of the guards would be higher than Resh's level.

"His control isn't normal. I'm confident in my skills, but I can't even give a business card to him."

"..."

Coke's skill was good, and Grid knew it well. They weren't as precise as Faker's, but Coke clearly had high-level control skills. Thus, Resh's control skill, which amazed even Coke, was tremendous.

"Based on the control alone, is he like Faker?"

"It is better to evaluate him as on the same level as Hao, who is one stage below Faker."

"Hah..."

There were really many masters in the world. Grid admired Resh.

"Ugh!" Then Resh allowed one blow through as the two guards kept attacking. He lost strength in one arm, and his shield slid down to the bottom, allowing the guard to strike his exposed chest.

"Heart of Steel!" Then Resh used a skill. He instantly boosted his defense and reduced the amount of damage he received. The reduced damage would be moved to the end of his sword and then amplify the attack power of his next blow. One of the guards received a thorough hit and screamed. Resh didn't miss this gap.

He evaded the attack of the other guard coming from the side and added attack power to the shield by using a charge, striking the head of the stumbling guard. Then there were the following movements of attacking and defending. After a fairly fierce duel, one of the guards turned to ash while Resh's health and mana were 10% and 15% respectively. It happened when Resh broke through the poisonous liquid, which the surviving guard had thrown, and grabbed the sword.

"Thanks to Resh, the enemy's performance has been well measured. Then I will now join in." Coke came forward. He didn't delicately neutralize the guard's attacks like Resh had done. The success rate of his counterattacks was also low. Still, he was twice as fast as Resh and found it easier to kill the guard.

The one-on-one fight was a big reason, but the difference in basic stats was much larger. When Coke's sword pierced the guard, the guard's health was drained out. Yet when the guard cut Coke, he didn't lose that much health. It wasn't just the influence of being overgeared. Coke's collection of passive and active skills from monsters boosted his stats. The actual difference in levels between Coke and Resh was only four levels, but it was actually more like 10. No, it was more like 20 or 30. Just like how Grid

overwhelmed other players of the same level due to the stats he gained from crafting, Coke was a second Grid who overwhelmed other users of the same level by raising his skills through hunting.

“...”Resh’s expression was blank. He knew he was behind Coke in both level and gear, but he didn’t expect the gap to be so big.

Coke yelled at Resh who was staring blankly, “Raise your spirits! It isn’t good to be like this so early!”

“...?”

What was he saying? Resh was feeling stunned when two new guards emerged from the darkness. Then they died immediately. Grid killed them.

He shook off the blood from his sword and muttered indifferently, “It is only level 380. This place is just the beginning.”

“...Ah.”

That’s why Resh was told to raise his spirits. Belatedly convinced of this, he wiped the poisonous liquid on his shield. He was ashamed of his fierce struggle and didn’t know where to look. Grid’s and Coke’s eyes were filled with respect and liking toward Resh as they watched him.

‘He will be very strong if he is raised properly...’

‘I want to learn his control skills while fighting together.’

‘I want to go home...’

Each of them had different thoughts as the party moved deeper into the Abyss.

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“Huh...”

“What?”

“This is ridiculous...”

Grid and his party had been acting for two hours. As the exploration of the Abyss progressed, Resh felt admiration, astonishment, and thrill. There was a limit for players. No matter how they raised their stats or applied magic and buffs, there were still system limitations that couldn’t be overcome.

A typical example was attack speed and movement speed. Unless it was an attack or mobile device implemented with a skill or magic, a player’s basic attacks were limited to ‘six times per second’ and general movement speed was limited to ‘18 meters per second.’

Once Resh learned about this, he felt it was impractical and was frustrated. Even if he continued to work hard to grow and achieve great results, he would eventually be bound by the limitations. This caused him to feel great frustration. His frustration that he would never be his best as a player somewhat dampened his enthusiasm. Yet at this moment, Grid was proving otherwise.

Limits? They could be overcome. Grid swung his sword nine times in one second. At first, Resh thought Grid was using a skill, but he wasn’t. Even Grid couldn’t avoid the constraints of resources.

“Transcendent...”

The sight of Grid transcending his limits eradicated the frustration and disillusionment rooted deep in Resh’s heart. Resh felt hopeful. He realized there was no need to feel despair and shrink back in front of the limitations he had yet to encounter.

“Ha! Hahahahat!”

It felt like the fog in front of him had disappeared. Resh threw off his vague worries and laughed with joy as he cut at the guards. His laughter echoed through the Abyss, making Grid confused.

‘What? Is he the party leader?’

Why was Resh laughing by himself all of a sudden? Grid wondered if Resh had secretly done something by himself. The suspicious Grid checked the party’s status.

[Party Name: Abyss Exploration

Party Leader: Grid

Party Members: Coke, Resh.

Item Distribution Method: Party Leader Acquisition]

‘Phew.’

The method of acquiring items was normal. It was impossible for Resh to secretly gain things alone. Then why was he laughing all of a sudden? Coke whispered to Grid, who shook his head and cut at the guard in front of him, “He is glad to see his skill proficiency go up.”

“...Ah.”

At the beginning of the Abyss, the guards were only level 380, so the level 399 Grid’s character experience and skill experience were unaffected. Nonetheless, it was different for Coke and Resh. For those who were still only level 360, level 380 monsters were good prey. The difference in level with party leader Grid meant not a lot of character experience was acquired, but the skill experience was rising sharply.

“Well done.”

Was this what being a volunteer felt like? Grid felt somewhat gratified and seemed to understand why people served others. He thought that it wouldn’t be bad to serve others sometimes.

‘Once I log out, I’ll send a donation to the flood victims...’

It was a tremendous change. Grid’s perception that serving others was being a pushover was changing. It started with the conversation with the cafe employee whose name was unknown. Grid realized that many people supported him because of the conversation he’d had on that day and felt deeply grateful to people. He had experienced a mental change and wanted to repay them. This would eventually be a change that would benefit Grid himself.

Flash!Flash!

The light elemental, revolving around Grid and illuminating his way, suddenly started to emit a brighter light. It meant that the surroundings were darker.

“It is becoming very narrow.”

Grid stopped in place as he was searching for the dukes who must be trapped somewhere. He was facing a very narrow cave. This was the only entrance to go further. It was cramped enough for only one adult male to pass through.

“It is narrow to swing a fist, let alone a knife.”

The obvious danger was foreseen.

‘If we move through this place, we will encounter monsters, and we won’t be able to fight back.’

Resh knew the difficulty of the exploration would rise dramatically from here and stepped forward. “I will take the lead. If I set up a shield and move forward, I will be able to withstand the monster’s attacks and reach the exit.”

“Do you know how long the cave is? If you receive attacks for more than a few minutes, you will die.”

“I have plenty of potions. I can endure the attack power of the guards for any length of time.”

“What if a monster stronger than the guards appear?”

“...I’ll endure as much as possible. There is no other way to do it.”

“There are many ways.”

During the conversation, Grid suddenly reached into the air and held a staff. At first glance, it was a big staff used by magicians. Grid separated the Blade Aiming at the Gods from the handle and allowed it to float around him.

“Let’s go.” Grid didn’t give Resh time to speak any further. He stepped forward and entered the cave first. They walked for approximately five minutes down this narrow road where their shoulders scratched the wall. How long was this frustrating path...? The patience of the group started to run out.

“Stop.” Grid stopped and gave a signal to Coke and Resh.

“Heok...!” Resh sucked in a breath as he peeked over Grid’s shoulder. It was because the atmosphere of the new monster blocking the road was too powerful.

[Contaminated Hunchback Guard]

It had a slim body bent over at the waist. The guard’s physique was very small, but this small physique was his strength. It meant the guard could move his body without restrictions in this narrow cave.

‘It is an elite mob.’

Resh felt anxious since this was a crisis. At this rate, Grid would suffer. Resh was fidgety and Grid was calm. He aimed at the guard with the staff and fired magic.

“Magic Missile.”

'Ah! That's it!'

Resh's expression brightened, but it was only for a moment. Magic Missile was basic magic, and the guard's health gauge didn't change. It was impossible to hunt an elite monster with high health with Magic Missiles.

"Magic Missile. Magic Missile. Alarm. Magic Missile. Magic Missile. Magic Missile. Magic Missile."

"...???"

It was an overwhelming volume offensive. Grid thoroughly utilized the short cooldown of basic magic. He fired Magic Missiles without interruption and also used Alarm every time the cooldown was over to store Magic Missiles. The guard was beaten constantly and pushed back for a while, before gritting his teeth and rushing over. He was no longer afraid of Magic Missile. Rather than being beaten to death, he would rather die from facing the intruder.

The distance between him and Grid narrowed. Grid watched with bored eyes and scoffed. Then dozens of Magic Missiles poured from the ceiling of the cave. The guard's waist bent further because he couldn't withstand the force, and his hideous face slammed against the ground. Grid's feet stepped on the back of the screaming guard.

"It is a difficult place."

He didn't feel troubled. Coke and Resh became aware of this and gulped from behind Grid. The Blade Aiming at the Gods dealt the finishing blow to the guard. Once the guard died, the information saying that it was level 392 was revealed.

Since the Abyss map was only 3% cleared, the difficulty of the Abyss was obviously high. The level of the monsters were 380 and 390, and there were many inconvenient factors in the terrain, making it comparable to the Ruins of the War God. How many players would be able to explore the Abyss with only three players?

In the process of breaking through the narrow cave, Grid met four guards and defeated them with the Blade Aiming at the Gods. Whenever he ran out of mana along the way, he summoned Overgeared Corn to take a break. In the end...

"Amazing..."

The group was able to escape the narrow cave and entered a huge, circular space. It was a place of which its end couldn't be seen. Thousands of prisoners were located around the circular wall, and some had hidden figures inside.

"Surprisingly, there are many prisoners who have been captured...? I was told it hadn't been opened in decades."

"I think the people who were captured a long time ago are still alive."

Every time they spoke, their voices echoed. A big rock was thrown down the cliff, but there was no sound.

"The scale is huge..."

“The map was only 3% after travelling for two hours, and it opened up to 16% as soon as we entered.”

“There is a good chance that there is a list of prisoners somewhere here.”

The first clear condition was to display more than 15% of the map, and the second condition was to secure a list of prisoners. The group’s exploration was likely to end here. However, Grid’s goal wasn’t only to clear the quest but to rescue the dukes.

“I hope the dukes are somewhere here.”

It was a space with a circumference of thousands of meters. However, there was only one path to step on. It was a floor that rose slightly in front of the circular wall, and it was only one meter wide. This was a structure where they would fall below the cliff if even one step was wrong.

“People with a fear of heights won’t be able to move a step.” Coke became pale at the sight.

Meanwhile, Grid was focused. He observed the thousands of prisoners one by one, hoping the dukes were somewhere in the area. It was at this moment that...

“Over here! Look over here!” A voice called out to the group from a relatively close prison. Grid shifted his gaze and found an old man with half his face covered by bushy hair and a beard. His limbs were as short as a dwarf. Despite having been trapped here for decades, he still had many muscles on his body.

He met Grid’s eyes and cried out desperately, “I am called Ke ong! I don’t know who you are, but please save me! I’ll definitely pay you back if you take me out of this place!!”

Ong was a term used for elderly men. It was rare for someone to call themselves ‘ong’, and it was the wrong expression in the first place. This was a very unusual self-introduction.

“The dwarves never forget the grace they are given! I swear that I won’t forget your grace!”

“...!!”

Dwarf? A dwarf...? However, the moment that Grid’s eyes widened...

“Are you an intruder?” A new person’s voice rang out from another prison. The prison door opened. The person who emerged from the inside was a young man with thousands of keys hanging around his waist.

“You came here empty-handed without sacrificing anything? This is interesting. I’ve never seen an intruder reaching here on their own feet.”

Biplonz was the name of the man who walked out of the prison. Unlike the guards Grid had met previously, Biplonz’s skin wasn’t melted, and his use of the human language was fluent. However, he wasn’t a human. He had white skin, sharp teeth, and black eyes without any whites. It was reminiscent of Grid in Blackening mode. The only difference was that his ears were pointed like an elf, and there was a tail coming from his ass.

In the past, Grid had encountered such beings. It was in a village in hell. Grid’s eyes were wide as he muttered, “Demonkin?”

“That is correct.” Biplonz unfolded a pair of wings. The wings—which were similar to a bat’s—fluttered, and Biplonz’ body flew through the air. “I was born here in the ‘rift’ and have never met any other

demonkin. I'm not sure if I'm a pure demonkin. This is the first time I've fought an invader. Can I fight well?"The man who spoke strange nonsense clenched his fists.

The ground where Grid's group stood collapsed, and the path leading to the cave shattered. Coke and Resh lost their footing and started to fall. Those who fell helplessly were forced to close their eyes. Grid shouted at them, "Maintain your spirit!"

"...!" Coke and Resh opened their eyes at Grid's shout and witnessed an amazing sight. Grid approached through the pile of rocks falling in the aftermath of the explosion and summoned dozens of metal plates around him. It was the application of the Automatic Transformation skill that automatically generated a metal shield to defend against projectiles in real time. Grid used Berith's Power to rescue Coke and Resh, deliberately descending below the rocks so that Automatic Transformation would kick in.

"Step on them!" Grid cried out. Coke and Resh twisted in the air and climbed onto the iron plates revolving around Grid. Simultaneously, wings spread out from Grid. They seemed to be dragon wings. There was a style and elegance that was different from Biplonz' wings that resembled a bat.

"Hiik! D-Draconian!"The dwarf Ke screamed.He started cheering for Biplonz, "Look, Guard Bip! Please help defeat that evil intruder!"

"..."

It was a bit annoying. The frowning Grid assembled the Sword Aiming at the Gods, causing Ke to be amazed. "...A sword so great that those better than it can be counted on 10 fingers!"

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'Let's ignore that person.'

Perhaps it was because he had been imprisoned for a long time, but Dwarf Ke's condition wasn't good. His inconsistent attitude made others suspect he was suffering from dementia. If Grid were focused on conversing with Ke right now, his fantasies about the dwarf species would probably collapse. Even so, he was very interested in Ke's remark which expressed the sword—the Sword Aiming at the Gods—as not the best masterpiece but one of the best, with those better than it being countable on 10 fingers.

Then he handed a pair of shoes to Coke who was standing precariously on an iron plate. It was Braham's Boots that had the Fly spell attached.

"Wear this."

"T-This...!"

Braham's Boots were a symbol of Grid. They were always present when Grid did a sword dance. Yet he was lending them to Coke?

'Do you trust me that much?'Coke's eyes trembled.

Grid stared straight at him and spoke decisively, "You absolutely can't die. If you die and drop these shoes, I will nag at you for the rest of my life."

“...Yes! I will definitely survive!”Coke responded vigorously and acted in a tactful manner. He immediately put on the shoes and activated Fly, grabbing Resh and finding a safe place to land. “I will assist Grid. Resh, get the list of prisoners and find the dukes.”

“Okay.” Due to the nature of the space, the requisite of fighting Biplonz was being able to fly. Resh was unable to fight, so he embarked on a prison search while Coke prepared for battle.

In the thick darkness of the air, Biplonz asked Grid, “Hrmm? Are you perhaps my kind?”

Grid was somewhat surprised. ‘Is it possible to have a meaningful conversation?’

Biplonz called the Abyss the ‘rift’ and said he had been born in it. He didn’t know anything beyond this dark world, and his childish way of speaking gave off a sense of innocence. Grid didn’t hesitate to question Biplonz. He peeked at the possibility of conversation and asked a question in return, “Why do you think I’m your kind?”

“We smell similar.”

‘Is it because of the demonic power?’

Demonic power created demonic energy. This was why Grid could use Blackening. Grid carefully thought about it before asking again, “If we are the same kind, are you willing to cooperate with me?”

At present, Biplonz was judged to be a NPC, not a monster. In retrospect, it was the same as the demonkin villagers Grid had met in hell. The system classified some demonkin as NPCs, just like other species such as the water clan, the elves, and dwarves. It was a different treatment from how the great demons or demonic creatures were unconditionally classified as monsters.

“Huh? No? I cooperate with humans.”

“I am a human.”

Biplonz had a surprisingly quick switch in attitude, just like Ke! The moment Grid revealed his identity, Biplonz shook his head. “You are a human, but you are an intruder. You are an enemy despite being a human because you didn’t bring any offerings.”

“I’m actually your kind.”

“Then you’re the enemy. I wanted to fight against my own people.”

“...”

Once again, the target being a monster or an NPC wasn’t a significant factor. In Satisfy, the story went according to the settings which had already been prepared. Grid sighed as he noticed he had to fight. Still, he tried to talk a bit more. He had too many questions for Biplonz.

-The seven of us sealed between the ground and hell...

These were the words of the seventh evil, Corruption.

“There is a story that the bottom of the Abyss is another world.It is a place that is in contact with hell and infested with demonic energy.”

Those were Resh's words. Up until this moment, Grid hadn't noticed. He was too stupid that it couldn't be helped. Grid only belatedly noticed it when Biplonz called the Abyss a 'rift.' It was likely to be the seal of the seven malignant saints. "You called this place the rift. Is that the rift between earth and hell? Why were you born here? Are there many other demonkin born there apart from you? When did you start interacting with the empire? You... Do you know about the seven malignant saints?"

"I don't know. I don't know any of that. I was just born here and cooperated with the human who gave me food."

Biplonz was relatively friendly. He even showed a willingness to answer questions. The problem was that he didn't know anything.

'Tsk,' Grid clicked his tongue.

[The information of the seven malignant saints and the information of the Abyss that you gathered have joined together!]

It was then that the system responded to Grid's questions. The notification window was updated randomly when Grid mentioned the Abyss and the seven malignant saints together.

[The Seventh Evil, 'Corruption', said he was sealed between hell and the ground.]

[The enigmatic demonkin 'Biplonz' indirectly revealed that the Abyss is the rift between hell and earth.]

[There seems to be a clear link between the Abyss and the seal of the seven malignant saints.]

[The hidden linked quest ★Place to Reach the Answer (1) ★ will proceed!]

[Place to Reach the Answer (1)]

[★ Hidden Linked Quest ★

Defeat the enigmatic demonkin Biplonz and get the key' to move to the heart of the Abyss!

Quest Clear Conditions: Biplonz' capture.

Quest Failure Conditions: Be defeated in the battle against Biplonz or Biplonz's death.

Quest Clear Reward: Place to Reach the Answer (1) linked quest.]

"...!"

The sensation of electricity flowed over the skin of the startled Grid. It was a sense of pleasure. After the Belial raid, Grid was deprived of the raw pleasure of playing the game.

He hadn't been able to feel the fun of leveling up because of the surge in the required experience. There had been no gains in general hunting, and there had been no raids. It had been a daily routine for the unlucky Grid, and there had been no storyline going on after the improvement of his relationship with the empire. He had started feeling bored.

The only time he felt 'I am playing a game right now' was when he occasionally did the king's quest. Now, he was close to the main story which hadn't been accessible for a while. Grid started to rejoice and become motivated.

'The reason why I couldn't access the seven malignant saints' storyline in the meantime is because the story was hidden deep in the empire.'

Since he was hostile to the empire, it was forced to be inaccessible to him. There was a reason why he hadn't found a clue in the past few months. Grid trembled with joy.

"Let's fight quickly. I have to kill the intruder or else I won't be able to eat," Biplonz suddenly spoke to Grid as he approached quickly and swung his sharp claws.

The duration of Berith's Power was over. Grid was no longer supported by Automatic Transformation and was fully exposed to Biplonz' attack. Nevertheless, Grid responded calmly without panicking. He believed in his high agility and status combined with Alex's Quick Gloves as he confronted Biplonz with a sword.

"...?"

"Keuk...!"

It was a one-second offense and defense. In the wave of 11 attacks committed by Biplonz, Grid barely defended against nine of them. Still, he couldn't respond to the remaining two and retreated while coughing up blood.

[You have suffered 5,900 damage.]

[You have suffered 6,130 damage.]

'Why is he so strong?'

To think that there were 11 attacks per second and they penetrated through Valhalla of Infinite Affection...? The confused Grid used Flash instead of trying to activate Blackening. He calculated that the light elemental would be even deadlier for Biplonz, a demonkin accustomed to darkness. Unexpectedly, Biplonz wasn't significantly affected by the light. He had lost his vision and was blinded for a while, but that was all. Biplonz didn't suffer like the vampires who saw the sun. During the time when he was blinded, Grid dealt five strikes and his expression stiffened.

'What is this bastard?'

He attacked five times with the Sword Aiming at the Gods, but only 30,000 damage was done. Since the Sword Aiming at the Gods added 20% divine damage and 50% additional damage to boss monsters and named NPCs, Biplonz defense must be really high. Biplonz was a demonkin who was vulnerable to divine attacks, and his name was shining, indicating he was a named NPC.

"Indeed, humans are strong..."

Biplonz was staring down at the blood flowing from the wound on his chest. He felt more interest than anger.

"I've never seen a weak person while I was born and raised here. I don't think that person is false about his assertion that humans will rule the world."

Due to the nature of the Abyss, the visitors and prisoners were likely to have a unique strength. Biplonz' idea was understandable. By the way, who was 'that person'?

"That person? Are you talking about the imperial princes or the emperor?"

"Huh? No, no. It is somebody who doesn't die."

"...?"

Somebody who doesn't die? Grid cocked his head for a while before his eyes widened. "The grandmaster?"

"I don't know what he is called. He always came alone."

"Are you talking about a person who always looks impatient?"

"Yes, that's right. Was he called grandmaster?"

"...Crazy."

Grid realized that there wasn't only one or two secrets hidden here. This was a place that had to be explored, and in order to do that, Biplonz must be captured.

"Blackening, Blacksmith's Rage, and Quick Movements." Grid used his buffs. He measured Biplonz' strength to be equivalent to one of the Seven Dukes'. No, he was at least equivalent to the best among the Five Dukes.

"Divinity. Item Combination."

It was right to use all his power. The Sword Aiming at the Gods was laid over the Enlightenment Sword. The battle began. Biplonz fought instinctively without any weapons, and his attack motions were extremely small. The quick and irregular attack patterns were linked to maximize Biplonz' powerful damage. There was no need to describe Grid's attack power, which was just strong through the combination of myth-rated transcendent items.

"Link!"

"Devouring Curtain!"

The explosions that occurred in succession caused the space to shake, and it seemed that it was going to collapse. Biplonz started using skills to avoid critical injuries, and the pressure on Grid gradually grew. Biplonz' attack power was very burdensome for Grid who had consumed half his health in exchange for using Blackening.

'If I knew this, I would've joined armor together!'

In the end, Grid believed his immortality would be consumed and summoned Noe. He didn't summon Randy, Tiramet, and the Overgeared Skeletons because they didn't have the capability of air combat.

"Nyahahat! It is the best demonic beast of hell... huh?" Noe appeared with his usual attitude. He was just rushing toward Biplonz when he jumped back with shock. "S-Scary."

"...?"

Noe was scared? So far, Noe only feared dragons and great demons. Yet he was scared of Biplonz? Grid was perplexed, but he still started his sword dance. He didn't miss the chance when Biplonz was looking at Noe.

"Transcended Link Flower!"

No matter how high Biplonz's strength was, he was classified as an NPC, not a monster. Biplonz's health was limited, so Grid was afraid Biplonz would die if he were hit by a four fusion sword dance. That's why Grid used a three fusion sword dance, but it was a very arrogant judgment.

Biplonz' claws, which were harder than steel, broke one of the energy blades of Transcended Link Flower. Biplonz' hand broke through the gap from the broken energy blade and grabbed at Grid's neck. In the process, the arms and chest exposed to Transcended Link Flower were turned to rags, but the strength to break the human neck remained. If Grid were an ordinary human, he would've died of a broken neck. However—

"...!?"

Grid's neck wasn't broken. Biplonz' strength might be equal or greater than one of the dukes', but it couldn't penetrate Grid's defense simply by trying to break his neck.

"This... Kek! Try to stop it!"

It was an instant attack skill that was triggered without any preparatory action. Unbreakable Justice was used, and it destroyed Biplonz' posture. Unbreakable Justice Lv. 8 inflicted damage equal to 900% physical damage. Combined with Grid's items and buffs, Unbreakable Justice wasn't at a level that Biplonz could ignore. In the first place, he suffered too much damage while breaking through Transcended Link Flower.

[The target has received 159,000 damage.]

"Kuek...!" Biplonz released Grid and fought back with clenched fists.

"Leap of Trust!" Coke used the skill attached to the legendary rated shield 'Luminary Guardian' and jumped between Grid and Biplonz. The wide-area damage of the skill struck Biplonz while Grid's defense rose sharply. Grid didn't miss this opportunity. He chose the sword dance that was sublimated under his name, and Kill struck Biplonz' chest.

"Cough!" As Biplonz experienced a critical injury, an unidentified character appeared on Biplonz' forehead before disappearing. Grid and Coke didn't see it because it happened in an instant. Then Grid suddenly pulled out a silver thread and captured the body of the falling Biplonz.

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[You have succeeded in capturing the enigmatic demonkin 'Biplonz.']

[Biplonz is relieved about his survival.]

[From now on, Biplonz will be more active in his conversation with you.]

[You have acquired the 'Magic Key Pack.]

[The weight of the key package is very heavy!]

[Your weight limit has exceeded by 150%, significantly reducing all speeds and stats.]

[Biplonz' stats have been released from the shackles of the keys and have been restored to normal values.]

'What is this?'

Was it necessary to mention it again? Grid's power included all types of titles and items and was out of the category of a player. In particular, the title Savior of the World was upgraded after the success of the Berith raid, and Grid's strength stat was now close to 4,000.

Then what about the item weight limit? To exaggerate, he could hunt all week long and not need to go to town even if he had many miscellaneous items. This was despite the dozens of auxiliary equipment and hundreds of potions he often carried out in the field. Yet one key package caused him to go over his weight limit? It was seriously suspicious.

Grid added strength to the arm holding the key package and checked the details.

[Magic Key Pack]

[Contains a total of 521 keys used in the Abyss.

Grandmaster Zikfrector has placed the 'Weight Propagation' spell on it.

Weight: 120% of the carrying weight limit.]

'The shackles of the keys...'

It was for certain. The intention of the magic in this key package was to suppress Biplonz.

'The grandmaster didn't trust Biplonz.'

Biplonz also seemed unfamiliar with the grandmaster, so Grid was certain that they weren't allies.

'I can't use the Castration Eye on this.'

Castration was an evil eye that eliminated 'beneficial effects.' However, the weight increase was classified as harmful. Of course, it might be beneficial depending on the user, but the current weight-boosting magic attached to the key package had the intention of harming the holder. Still, Grid tried to use the Castration Eye.

"I won't allow your comfort."

"..."

Biplonz was embarrassed as he looked at Grid like a madman. Moreover, the effect of the Castration Eye wasn't applied, and the intensity of the embarrassment increased. Grid coughed and changed the subject, "How interesting. The grandmaster used you as the manager of this place despite doubting you? How could he leave the keys to someone he didn't trust in the first place?"

“The person who entrusted me with the keys wasn’t the grandmaster but the emperor of one hundred years ago. The reason he could leave the keys with me was because he knew for certain I couldn’t leave here. In order not to starve to death, I have to protect the keys faithfully.”

This meant that at least 100 years had passed since Biplonz was born and began staying here. He had been living with these prisoners for over a hundred years in such a dark place. It must not have been a good life.

“Why can’t you get out of here? Couldn’t you go down a bit further or go up?”

“I’m afraid because the humans upstairs are too strong, and there is a monster downstairs.”

“Monster?”

“A hydra.”

“...!”

Grid knew the hydra. The cry of Sword Demon Iyarugt still lingered in his mind.

“Fearless person...!Do you have 10 lives?Even a hydra failed to land an attack on me!”These words had been directed towards Jude.

At the time, Iyarugt was really trying to kill Jude. The stupid Jude had mistaken Iyarugt as an enemy, causing Iyarugt’s anger to soar to the top of his head. In any case, Iyarugt was the number one swordsman of hell and not even a hydra could land a blow on him. Considering that Iyarugt was comparable to a great demon in his prime, Grid could speculate that a hydra was on the same level as a great demon.

“I thought a hydra lived in hell. Why is it here?”

“I don’t know. Only one thing is certain. It is incredibly strong. It has nine heads, and no matter how many times I cut them off, the heads regenerate. Meanwhile, the poison it spits out is powerful enough to melt my flesh and bones.”

“Hrmm...”Grid found it troublesome.

In order to completely clear the ★ Place to Reach the Answer (1) ★ hidden quest, did he have to fight off the hydra to reach the heart of the Abyss? Moreover, he would have to do it with just Coke and Resh...?

‘It is impossible.’

The hydra was a monster that was at least at the level of the lowest-rated great demon. It wasn’t an opponent that could be easily confronted in his full condition, let alone when he had already used Berith’s Power and Blackening. He still had one use of Divinity and Belial’s Power remember, but this wasn’t enough.

‘It isn’t an environment where I can use Storm Demonic Energy Field.’

Storm Demonic Energy Field required rain clouds. It was difficult to cast inside the Abyss. Even if it could be used, it had little utility against super-named boss monsters.

“By the way,” Grid pondered for a moment before grabbing Noe who was hanging on his back like a cicada, “Why are you so scared?”

Noe, the best demonic beast of hell—this wasn’t Noe’s self-assertion. The memphis was indeed the best demonic beast of hell. Presently, Noe was only a fat cat, but one day, he would become an adult and show off a presence beyond that of a hydra. The only things he feared were dragons and great demons. Grid couldn’t understand why Noe was intimidated by the demonkin Biplonz.

The drooping Noe held onto Grid’s neck in a frightened and flustered manner. His big black eyes were trembling. “I-I don’t know. I’m just scared.”

“Um... Is my face really ugly?” Biplonz was a handsome person. There were no blemishes on his white skin, he had fine features and glossy black hair. Despite the fact that his eyes were black without any whites, he was definitely handsome. Still, this was a story from a human perspective. From a demonkin’s point of view, he might have a horrifying appearance.

Grid glimpsed his past self from Biplonz. “Have strength...”

Noe’s weak answer caused Biplonz’ shoulders to sag. “...Yes, thank you.”

Was his face ugly enough to scare a little beast? Having never met any other demonkin, Biplonz was shocked to learn how ugly he was today.

Coke stared blankly at the three people (?) talking harmoniously. ‘Why did he suddenly become friends with the demonkin he was just fighting?’

It was a flow that couldn’t be understood even though Coke had been watching the entire time.

‘This is Grid’s affinity...’

He had captured the hearts of the empire’s dukes and even started to seduce a demonkin... Coke was feeling a great sense of admiration toward Grid.

“L-Look, Guard Bip! Wake up! Don’t be twisted by the evil draconian! Stop talking and beat him up straight away!!” A dwarf was screaming in the distance. It was Ke. He was shocked when he saw Grid and shouted again, “L-Look, this draconian gentleman! Let me see your sword!! If I can examine your sword, I can die right now!”

“He seems to be mentally abnormal. Are all dwarves like this?” This was Coke’s impression.

Grid felt disgusted. “Those are serious words. It isn’t all dwarves. It’s just that guy. How can his mind be fine when he has been locked in this place for decades?”

It was terrible to think that this was the personality of the dwarf species itself. His goal was to learn blacksmithing techniques from the dwarves and use them to strengthen the Overgeared Kingdom. The dwarves must be a normal race...

Grid thought this and flew in front of the imprisoned Ke with his dragon wings. “Do you have bad memories associated with the draconians?”

“T-There can’t be any good memories with an evil draconian... Huh?” Ke was shouting only to close his mouth with a flinch, his eyes widening. Then he pointed at Grid with trembling fingers. “W-Were you talking to me just now?”

“That’s right.”

“H-Hik! Has there ever been such a crazy draconian? How dare a draconian speak with no honorifics to an honorable person like me! Are you a crazy draconian?”

“...”

“Heok! Don’t look at me! I’m scared! A crazy dragon is scarier! Go away!! Please disappear from in front of my eyes!!”

“...”

It was better to calm this dwarf down. Grid sighed and pulled out the keys package. It was to open the prison door where Ke was trapped. However, there was a problem. There were 521 keys, so it was hard to find the right prison key. Grid was placing the keys in the lock in turn, and he finally couldn’t bear it anymore. He pulled out the Master Key. The Master Key engaged with the old lock and opened the door of the prison where Ke was locked.

Ke’s eyes glowed like lanterns at the sight. “I-Is that the universal key made by Pagma? Where did you get that? Please let me look at it!”

“...”

Ke was afraid just a moment ago...

Grid found Ke’s attitude toward the Master Key absurd. He stared at Ke for a moment before handing the keys pack to Coke. “It is hard to keep because it is heavy. In any case, I can’t throw it away, so you keep it for me.”

“Yep!”

Thanks to Coke, Grid’s body was now much lighter. He introduced himself to Ke, “Ke ong, I am King Grid of the Overgeared Kingdom. I’m a human, not draconian, and I am Pagma’s Descendant. Let’s clear up the misunderstanding and have a conversation.”

“Overgeared Kingdom? King? Human? Pagma’s Descendant?” Ke’s expression was blank.

He stared at Grid for a long time before starting to step back. Ke quickly entered the prison again and closed the prison door himself. “Please leave me and just go... I don’t have the confidence to associate with a crazy person like you.”

At the time when Ke was trapped in the Abyss, a country called the Overgeared Kingdom didn’t exist. This was also a place where only high-ranking members of the Saharan Empire could enter. It meant that the king of another country, as Grid claimed he was, would never be able to enter here. It didn’t make sense for a human to have dragon wings, and as for the bullshit of being Pagma’s Descendant...

Then it happened when Ke was squatting quietly in a corner of the prison.

"I found it!" Resh's cry was heard in the distance. "I've found the dukes, Grid!!"

"...!!" Grid's eyes widened as he hurriedly moved his body. In a state of great anxiety, he took a potion that increased his speed and arrived by Resh's side in an instant. Then he saw it. The three dukes were trapped inside the prison. Fortunately, all of them were alive. The problem was...

"Why? Why is this..." Grid's body trembled. Grenhal had lost both his eyes, Morse had his limbs shattered, and Basara was staring into the air with eyes devoid of focus. The gruesome appearance of the three people caused Grid's wrath to boil. "Which bastard...?!"

Grid's eyes were spinning, and he felt dizzy. As Grid's anger transcended his sense of reason, he wobbled for an instant. Coke was handed the Master Key and opened the prison door.

Grenhal belatedly sensed Grid and barely spoke in a hoarse voice, "Run away... Run away..."

"It is too late." The last voice belonged to Biplonz.

The fierce-eyed Grid stared at Biplonz, who had recovered considerably and unraveled the silver thread tying him up.

"The Sword Duke is coming."

"...!"

[Your intuition senses danger.]

[You have discovered a strong person of this era!]

A sword fell toward Grid's head. This wasn't a substantive sword. It was a concentrated object powerful enough to remind him of Piaro's Pounding Mortar.

"Cough!" Grid was unable to cope with the sudden attack and started bleeding. His body hit the steel bars as three swords poured toward him.

"Grid!" Coke, who was supporting the dukes, belatedly took out of his shield and ran to Grid, but it was too late. He was as slow as a turtle due to the key package. All three swords were on the verge of penetrating Grid's chest, and Grid had to prepare for the pain to continue. Then it happened just as Noe flew forward and prepared to use a skill...

Biplonz moved in advance and protected Grid. His claws deflected the trajectory of the three swords. "I have repaid your grace."

"I am so thankful that I am on the verge of tears." Grid smiled as he assembled the Sword Aiming at the Gods.

He could see a middle-aged man descending.

[Chapter 1066](#)

The Saharan Empire is the supreme nation on the West Continent. With a large amount of resources, as many talents as there are stars, and advancing technology, it becomes stronger every day.

This was the introductory statement that appeared when creating a new character. It was why the majority of players chose the empire as their country. The emperor produced outstanding talents every era, fitting of their size. Coincidentally, those who saw the peak of the sword were always born outside the empire. This was the reason why Piaro, who rose to the rank of great swordsman at an early age, was highly anticipated in the empire.

“It has been a while, around four years.”

Sword Duke Limit... As he descended from the ceiling, his appearance was impressive. He had a strong gaze and rough and masculine eyebrows. His finely combed hair and shaved chin reflected his meticulous personality, and he seemed to be a person who controlled himself well.

“...”

Limit’s arrival cooled Grid’s wrath. Grid, who had lost his grip on the strings of reason after seeing the state of the three dukes, quickly tied the strings firmly together again. The Sword Duke was such a bigshot that Grid was forced to cool down. He was the same as Rachel, one of the strongest dukes.

During Piaro and Asmophel’s era, Limit had been obscured by their shadows but not anymore. Piaro and Asmophel had wasted years hiding from the world while Limit was steadily advancing in the emperor’s faction and then the empress’ faction as well. He was in a position to describe himself as the strongest person in the empire, and Grid was feeling it in real time.

[Your fighting energy is rising.]

[Your fighting energy is rising.]

The Hero King’s reaction was unusual. The rate at which the thick red aura of fighting energy surrounded Grid’s body was the fastest ever. Limit descended and stopped at a higher position than Grid.

“Overgeared King Grid. I often hear your stories these days. Why is the king of another country interfering in the affairs of the empire? Given that your country is currently at war with the empire, your actions seem to be intent on harming the empire. How can the representative of a nation be so frivolous and unscrupulous?”

The people of the empire had a habit of calling all countries other than the empire a small country. However, Limit was different. He referred to the Overgeared Kingdom in the polite way of ‘home country.’ This wasn’t something good. It meant that Limit didn’t look down on the Overgeared Kingdom.

Grid’s tension was heightened. ‘Damn. I’d rather he ignore me than be vigilant.’

His chest was still throbbing despite taking potions to restore his health. The damage that Grid suffered from Limit’s attack was a huge 32,000. Ever since Grid became Overgeared King, there had only been two cases when he suffered such a large amount of damage at once.

‘He is the real deal.’

Morse, in his beast form, exerted a strength similar to or slightly superior to Grid in a fully buffed state. Spear Saint Rachel’s peacetime state was at least equal to Morse’s beast state. Sword Duke Limit was at least an equal of Rachel. It was right to consider him as more difficult than Kyle, who was classified as the weakest of the Five Pillars.

'Then what if he isn't vigilant?'

What if he was careless like the Yangban Garam? Garam was superior in every way, but he had the 'careless' attitude which had allowed Grid to find a gap. Grid observed Limit's sword seriously as he waited for the cooldown time of the potion to end. Even in the darkness, the sword gave off a blue glow. It seemed to be a weapon with a minimum of the legendary rating, and there seemed to be many hidden options. Grid felt regretful.

'Pagma's Eyes are the problem.'

Pagma's Eyes were the evolved version of the Legendary Blacksmith's Eyes. The Legendary Blacksmith's Eyes merely confirmed the information of the target item while Pagma's Eyes had the function of enhancing understanding of the target item and copying it. It was overwhelmingly better but the resulting recoil was a cooldown of one hour.

'I can't use it because of the damn cooldown.'

In order to win a fight, he needed to know the enemy. Checking the item information of the equipment of a player or NPC in advance had a great impact on the winning percentage.

'I have to use it properly.'

Grid was becoming a gamer. He was now clearly aware of the importance of having information in advance and didn't overlook it. That's why he felt even more regretful. It was very fast. Grid's thoughts reduced the potion cooldown time by only one second. Thinking quickly, Grid focused on the conversation with Limit. "I can't say that I intended to harm the empire. I just wanted to finish the war with the empire. On the way, I noticed that the dukes were being treated unfairly and came to help them."

"You wanted to end the war, so you killed Sky King Rigal, Drunk Duke Diworth, and tens of thousands of imperial soldiers?"

"Those were unavoidable acts of self-defense. How can I overlook those who invaded my territory and harmed my people?"

"The fact that the three dukes are trapped here is also a fair punishment. There was a situation where they colluded with you, the enemy king, and betrayed their country. They are like this because of you. You showing up here will make their position even worse."

"My interaction with them was to improve the relationship between my home country and the empire, restoring peace. I have no intention of harming the empire!"

"How can I believe that? It is a crime itself to have colluded with the enemy king, no matter the intention."

Limit's argument was reasonable. Of course, this was a story for when hidden secrets didn't exist.

"X...!" Grid's patience quickly ran out. He realized there was no progress in the conversation and reflexively spat out swear words. "Speak less nonsense and be honest, you X! You are afraid the dukes will tell the emperor the truth after they figured out that Piaro was wronged, you XX!"

“...”

“Was it you? You and 4th Imperial Prince Edan made them this way?”

Grid lost the strings of reason that he had grabbed again in fear, but Limit wasn't shaken. Despite this being the first scolding he had heard in his life, he remained polite as he said, “So crass. The higher a person's status is elevated, the more careful they should be about their words and deeds. Yet you don't even have dignity when saying something. Your birth status can't be covered up.”

“Dignity is bullshit! I asked if you made them this way!”

“You have no right to know.”

“Ick...!”

Grid should've brought Huroi here. Only then could he deal a good beating with his mouth. Grid was deeply disappointed and suddenly recalled Knight Summoning.

‘Will it work?’

It was a life or death crisis. He couldn't overcome this with skill alone. Let's borrow strength.

“Knight Summoning!” Grid immediately used the skill. Still, it was as he had expected.

[There is a place where the number of people entering is restricted due to the quest.]

[Knight Summoning doesn't work.]

The system rejected it. This was something that was already expected.

“Did you try to call Piaro? I'm sorry you couldn't call him. It was a great opportunity to defeat him.” Limit twisted his waist slightly. “I have received intelligence that the knights of the three dukes are gathering in the capital. They have started to doubt the situation, so I have a lot of work to do.”

He was busy.

“I don't want to waste more time on you.”

Bright particles of light started to gather on Limit's sword like stars.

“I will punish you in the name of a duke of Saharan. First, there is the sin of killing the imperial nobles and armies.”

The distance between Grid and Limit was approximately 5 meters. However, Limit swung his sword without narrowing the distance, and the bright sword energy reached Grid.

‘Is it a skill?’

The attack motion was very short, but it was an attack in the form of light particles. It couldn't be a normal attack. The effect of the skill itself wasn't very glamorous, but it was clearly powerful.

“Noe, don't come out rashly. Only assist me when you see a gap,” Grid judged quickly and chose to evade rather than confront Limit's attack. He took two quick steps to the side, and Limit's light attack slammed into the bars he had just been leaning against.

"...!" The moment the sound rang in his ears, Grid's eyes widened. Limit was approaching right above his head.

"There is the sin of subverting the nobles of the empire in order to overthrow the empire."

The steel boots around Limit's feet kicked at Grid's temple like a ball. It was so powerful that Grid's head might've been crushed if he hadn't been wearing the crown and helmet together.

[You have suffered 6,750 damage.]

"There is the sin of illegally breaking into the empire."

His physical condition was abnormal. Grid's brain was shaking, and he was temporarily unable to control his body, allowing himself to be mangled by Limit's particles of light. Limit's attack speed was six strikes per second, but it was difficult for Grid to cope with since each attack was complex.

"There is the sin of protecting Piaro who was charged with the major crime of treason."

Limit's sword cut Grid's entire body and only stopped after piercing his heart.

"The death penalty."

Grid's chest was soaked in red blood. Blood flowed like a river from the gaps in Valhalla. Grid's body slipped forward, and at the same time, Limit moved sideways to dodge.

"Hey, do you think I will die from that much?"

After being helplessly beaten, Grid barely stood up and fought back. The soaring golden blade contained speed that transcended Limit's attack speed. The difference in speed filled in the difference in skill. Limit's serene eyes which were without any panic and Grid's bloodshot eyes stared at each other. The remnants of an orange shield spilled over the bloody Grid. It was the shield created by the First King title.

"Do you think you can beat anyone by holding a sword? I guess you've been using that?"

"..."

Limit's high insight captured Grid's hand, which wore a ring that hadn't been seen since a while ago. It was red and transparent and contained the powerful aura of a vampire.

As his sword interlocked with Limit's sword, Grid took a step forward. It was the first stride of a sword dance that contained anger and hatred. Grid pushed at Limit's sword while moving forward again. Limit recovered his sword, and light particles started to gather again on the horizontally placed sword. Grid's sword aimed at Limit contained a terrible killing intent.

"Kill!"

"Cutting Stars."

Limit's expression was calm as the two swords collided. He was convinced that his swordsmanship was far superior to Grid's swordsmanship and that he wouldn't lose when it came to technique. This wasn't

arrogance or carelessness. It was a conclusion that was reached after several collisions and could be called insight. However, Limit overlooked one part.

“...!?”

Grid’s Swordsmanship wasn’t Grid’s individual skill. The essence of two legendary skills and knowledge was contained in Grid’s sword dance. In the aftermath of the powerful clash, both Grid’s and Limit’s bodies were thrown away. Grid was pushed back into prison bars and stopped there while Limit barely stopped after flying thousands of meters into the center of the space.

Limit’s bloody eyes shook. His always calm face was filled with confusion and frustration. Grid felt refreshed and raised his hand. “Come on. Bring it on.”

Limit gritted his teeth and broke through the air. He narrowed the distance to Grid again and drew an arc with his sword. Coke and Resh ambushed him from behind while Grid was already completing a new sword dance. The fierce battle between the four people shook the space.

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The battle was surprisingly intense at the beginning, but tension was only felt by Grid’s party. The more he grasped the skills of Grid’s party, the better that Limit became. Limit’s swordsmanship was like a torrent. It was difficult to cope with because the flow continued and then changed steeply. The moment they closed one eye, they would be swept away.

“Pant... Pant...”

After dozens of blows, Coke and Resh were hiding behind a shield like turtles hiding in their shells. Grid’s situation wasn’t much different. Unlike Coke and Resh, he wielded his sword against Limit. Still, he was only defending, and it wasn’t even a perfect defense. Grid rarely found a chance to fight back. The swordsmanship he had never seen before was completely disabling him. Grid felt like his arms and legs were tied tightly. He felt like he was in a sandbag.

‘Wielding a sword against three of us at the same time...’

Sword Duke, the higher stage of a great swordsman—it was one level below a Sword Saint but not at the present time. Sword Saint Kraugel was still incomplete while Sword Duke Limit was already complete. At this point, the Sword Duke was at a higher level than the Sword Saint.

“Keuk!”

The one-sided loss of health was repeated. Red blood once again filled Grid’s field of view as he failed to fight back. Most of the blood was from Grid, but he didn’t despair. He stayed calm as he was peeking at hope. It was hope caused by his insight stat surpassing 2,000 points.

[Insight]

[Discover the target. Predict risks.

* The higher the number, the higher the probability.]

It was a short description that seemed scarce, but Grid knew the power of insight thanks to his past experiences. The longer he observed the target, the more likely it was that the insight stat's perception effect was maximized. How much time passed by? Perhaps it was only a few minutes.

However, Grid felt like this hellish time was longer than an hour or two. He started to see it. For the first time, Grid responded to Limit's sword that he wasn't able to cope with previously. The element of luck didn't interfere at all. He used his excellent insight and agility to block Limit and fight back.

"...?" Limit found it somewhat strange.

The pattern of the battle changed dramatically. Grid started to detect more of Limit's strikes and released more counterattacks. Thanks to this, Coke and Resh managed to assist Grid. The battle was no longer one-sided. The three high rankers, who combined experienced and talent, stood up against Limit and cooperated like they were old colleagues.

Limit, who was finally on the defensive, stepped back after using a sword curtain. Blood was flowing from his left arm.

"You've already seen through my swordsmanship, which boasts hundreds of turns... You are a genius. No wonder why Rigal and Diworth were hit."

Throughout the battle, Limit was conscious of the 'sword dance.' By desperately blocking Grid's sword dances, he maximized the advantage of his swordsmanship. Yet it was pointless now. Since Grid had adapted to his swordsmanship, Limit couldn't afford to suppress Coke and Resh while blocking Grid's sword dances.

"One." Limit changed his stance. Unlike his old grip where he held the sword in the middle of the handle with the tip pointed downward, this time he grasped the innermost part of the handle and straightened the tip. "I will be wary of this talent and deal with it using a new swordsmanship."

"...?" A glare flashed into Grid's eyes as he doubted his ears.

It was a stab at superspeed.

[The target has received 24,500 damage.]

[You have suffered 7,800 damage.]

[The target has defended against your attack.]

[You have been struck with a serious blow!]

[Half of the damage suffered has been received by party member 'Resh' instead. You have suffered 6,950 damage.]

[Party member 'Coke' has blocked the attack!]

"Very... good!"

[You have suffered 6,330 damage!]

“Shit, how rotten!”

He didn't know how many times he had fallen down and then gotten up again. Limit—who had been using swordsmanship that flowed like water—had changed his style, and Grid was suffering greatly. The new style consisted of short stabs like a boxer's jab. Limit's quick stabs were accompanied by the physical phenomenon of 'knockback' while a lower stab often triggered the physical phenomenon of 'knock down.' It was a swordsmanship that really drove people crazy.

Grid was pushed back, and he fell down. His body struck the ground whenever he allowed a blow to get through, and he was now covered in dirt and blood, making him look like a beggar.

'I'm getting mad.'

He had finally adapted to the sword style only for it to change. It was almost like a boss entering a new phase. Was there a dog like this? Gulp. Grid, who didn't want to show any signs of shaking, took a potion with an expressionless face. His current health was 53,097. Thanks to the help of Coke and Resh as well as using Elfin Stone's Ring and Doran's Ring, Grid maintained his health at over 50,000.

It meant there wasn't a risk of dying considering Limit's attack power and Grid's defense. Of course, he didn't know what would happen if Limit used an ultimate technique, but at least, the motion before using the skill would be big. In that gap, he could also use a sword dance. Yes, it was still okay. They hadn't lost yet.

How long would this balance be maintained? Stamina was the biggest problem.

'We will be overwhelmingly disadvantaged if we continue like this.'

However, it was impossible to speed up the process. He might have the help of insight, but it would take a long time to adapt to Limit's new fighting style. The frustrating thing was that if he succeeded in holding on again and defeating Limit's swordsmanship, he might have to face another new style.

'It is unlikely that he has shown all his swordsmanship here.'

Grid wanted to seize an opportunity to use a four fusion sword dance. He knew that Limit's total health was less than 50 million. So if he could hit this person properly with a four fusion sword dance, there was a possibility of reversing the situation.

“...!”

Grid's train of thought didn't last long. It was because he noticed that Limit's shoulders were moving slightly. Grid stopped thinking and swiftly raised his sword. Limit's sword stabbed it, causing a shockwave. In terms of speed, Grid was superior to Limit. If he could detect the attack ahead of time like he did just now, the defense probability was very high. The problem was that it was hard to detect.

'As expected.'

Grid felt it through his fingertips and frowned. Limit's attack power was increasing. It would've been impossible for Grid to withstand Limit's attack power if he hadn't swapped his armor to Triple Layers, which greatly weakened the power of Limit's stabbing and slashing attacks, and if he hadn't equipped Lantier's Cloak. The balance would've been broken, even with Coke and Resh's help.

'In the end, the answer is items.'

Limit was a swordsman who didn't only rely on techniques. He hadn't reached the threshold of transcendence and hadn't exceeded the limits of the human species. Therefore, he wasn't faster than Grid, but all his other stats were superior to Grid. Grid was only better than Limit in speed and items. Among them, his speed was being hampered by Limit's swordsmanship, and the benefits couldn't be fully realized. All that remained was the items. At this point, Grid regretted giving away Iyarugt.

'It would've been possible if I had Iyarugt.'

Iyarugt was a strong weapon. In addition to the effect of summoning Sword Demon Iyarugt, it reduced the opponent's healing ability, maximized combo power, and even allowed him to know the best 'sword path.' Iyarugt was the best sword in many ways. In particular, Iyarugt's ability to detect the best sword path would be a great help in this situation.

So what if Sword Duke Limit's swordsmanship was great? It was surely nothing in front of Iyarugt, who used a sword against great demons. Iyarugt would surely break Limit's swordsmanship.

'Wait.'

Grid's mind started spinning quickly. He thought of his Item Transformation skill. It was the skill to transform pavranium into a particular item. The premise was that he must have the production method for the target item, but there was no way Grid didn't know how to make Iyarugt after using it for several years. Grid's understanding of Iyarugt was already at 100% a long time ago.

'Turn the Blade Aiming at the Gods into Iyarugt and then join it with the Enlightenment Sword...'

Wouldn't the damage be guaranteed? Moreover, wouldn't he also be able to find the best sword path? Grid was currently losing, so worrying about it any longer was meaningless. He had to implement the solution as soon as he thought about it. Grid, who had fallen because of Limit's low attack, jumped up and shouted, "Item!!"

"...?"

"Trans—! Formation!"

[What item do you want to turn the pavranium into?]

The moment the notification window appeared.

"What are you trying to do??" Limit sensed something suspicious and pushed Grid even harder. He had been conscious of Coke and Resh throughout the battle, but for the first time, he ignored the two of them and only rushed toward Grid. A bombardment of stabs emerged from heavy rain.

Grid's vision flashed red. Grid coughed up blood as he tried to avoid Limit's attacks and manipulate the Pulling Device. The Blade Aiming at the Gods was separated from the handle of the Enlightenment Sword.

"Noe!"

"Nyoong! Become Majestic!"

[Become Majestic (SSS)]

[Hell's best demonic beast, a memphis has pushed the power of the thunder stone to the limit. A shield of lightning that blocks all attacks will be created for two seconds.

Cooldown Time: 30 minutes

* The user will become drained for one minute after using the skill.]

"...?!"

The startled Limit quickly twisted around as Noe deployed a protective shield in front of Grid. As a seasoned person, he immediately recognized the attributes of the shield and started using his ultimate technique. He knew that the shield wouldn't last long and decided it was time to end the battle after the shield disappeared.

"Shit!"

"Don't ignore us!"

Coke and Resh rushed to interrupt Limit's casting, but they couldn't break through Limit's sword curtain with their offensive power. A large amount of light particles started to gather at the end of Limit's sword, and Noe's shield faded away. It was an increasingly urgent situation. Grid pointed the Blade Aiming at the Gods and shouted, "Iyarugt!"

In other words, he was stating what item he wanted to turn the pavranium into. The pavranium glowed and started changing its shape. It took the form of a golden and transparent sword. Grid consumed the remaining number of usage for Divinity and used Item Combination.

[The Lightning Sword Born from Enlightenment and Strong Desires has successfully combined with Iyarugt (Transformed)!]

It was a black-gold transparent blade surrounded by black flames and blue lightning. The power of nature was condensed in it.

"Huup!" Dwarf Ke cried out with astonishment at the sight of Grid's new sword.

"I'm tired nyang... Hyaang..." Noe fell listlessly to the cold ground. Simultaneously, the lightning shield defending Grid disappeared.

"There is no chance." Limit, who had been prepared in advance, swung his sword. Hundreds of thousands of light particles spilled out like the Milky Way and struck Grid. Grid hoped that combining Iyarugt with the Enlightenment Sword was give the best sword path...

"...?"

Iyarugt was silent. He didn't tell Grid the path of the sword.

'Ah...!' A chill went down Grid's spine. He realized that he had overlooked one principle regarding Iyarugt. The best sword Iyarugt wasn't the weapon called Iyarugt but the ego of Iyarugt that dwelled in the weapon. Item Transformation alone didn't embody Iyarugt's ego.

A huge explosion struck Grid. Grid's health was greatly reduced during the process of Item Transformation, and it had now run out.

[A legend doesn't die easily. You can resist all attacks for 5 seconds with a minimum of health.]

Immortality... It was the sign of a crisis. This was the moment when Grid's last card was exhausted. Was it possible to decide the outcome in five seconds when he hadn't fully seen through Limit's swordsmanship yet? It was impossible. He had to give up. Grid bowed his head with despair and frustration.

'...No.'

His brain was spinning quickly. Accustomed to a crisis, he finally showed his true value in the midst of this crisis. It was his potential. Limit kept attacking. Grid powerlessly fell to the ground, and his blood-stained hands headed toward his sword.

"Granting... an Ego..."

It was a hidden piece that he obtained from clearing the Behen Archipelago. An unavoidable force was triggered.

[The soul of Sword Demon Iyarugt has entered your weapon.]

"...?!" Limit became as solid as a stone statue. His heart that had been convinced of victory was pierced by Grid's sword.

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Duguen! A rough pulse and hot blood flowed through the cold metal. Iyarugt had craved this sensation during the time when he was only a soul wandering with his body sealed. It was because he felt alive by destroying life. This was the only time he realized that he was alive.

However, not anymore. Iyarugt was in the process of reclaiming his body. He said goodbye to the sick and miserable days when he felt relief through killing.

-Avoid it, a familiar voice echoed from the transparent black-gold sword. It was the voice of Sword Demon Iyarugt. He spoke to the Grid who was showing a slightly emotional expression, -The target's heart wasn't completely destroyed. It was the best surprise attack, but the skilled guy coped well.

"Iyarugt, I didn't know if you were going to answer my call."

[Granting an Ego]

[You can give the target item an ego.

It will be classified as an ego item, and the value will be astronomical.

Genuine - (Fighting Against the Gods) Legendary Blacksmith's Craftsmanship Skill has been mastered and the number of times an ego can be granted is 10.

Current number of egos that can be given: 9/10]

The explanation of Granting an Ego was poor. Additionally, there were strict limitations on the number of uses, and Grid hadn't been able to experiment with it. Then the virtual stage of the National Competition gave Grid a chance. During the Demon King's Subjugation event, Grid had placed Braham's ego inside the magic machine and managed to determine four pieces of information.

First, in order to use Granting an Ego, Grid and the target ego must know each other. Second, Granting an Ego was only triggered when the target ego responded to Grid's call. Third, no matter what form the ego existed in, it would forcibly belong to the item the moment it responded to the call. Fourth, if the item that the ego belonged to was destroyed, the target ego would return to its original place.

That's right. Granting an Ego was a system where the will and rights of the target ego were given priority over the user. If the target ego didn't respond to Grid's call, it wouldn't be activated.

Grid was honestly impressed. Iyarugt wasn't loyal to Grid, and he was a demonkin with little affinity with Grid. Grid was only half confident that Iyarugt would answer the call, but he was surprised that it was immediate. He was even happier since he was in an urgent crisis.

-You called out for me so desperately. Hum hum.

"...?"

The tone was awkward. It was different from his usual cynical tone.

"What? Did you start to like me after not seeing me for a while?" Grid asked.

Iyarugt snapped, -Shut up and step back.

"...!" Grid responded immediately.

His high level of concentration quickly transmitted Iyarugt's cry to his brain, and his high agility allowed his body to move the moment his brain commanded it. The particles of light swirled and passed by Grid's nose. If he had been a bit later, his face would've been cut.

"Cough, cough... It's amazing."

The so-called rating system wasn't without critical points. Almost all creatures in Satisfy had a key point that could be classified as a so-called weakness. It might be the same attack method, but the difference in damage that the user suffered depended on whether the target was hit or not.

"It has been a long time... Cough... really...! Cough, cough!" Blood poured from Limit's mouth and nose as he coughed repeatedly. His eyes were red and congested, and his legs were trembling. This was an opportunity now that Limit was suffering from the physical condition of bleeding, and his weakness was at the peak.

-Don't give him a break.

Hundreds of lines were displayed in Grid's field of view as he faced Limit. Most of the solid lines were black or broken, but two solid lines were glowing red and they continued to the end. This was the 'best sword path' that Iyarugt was showing him.

The particles of light were seeping into Limit's body. It was a scene where Limit was using sword energy to restore his wounds. Grid had no intention of wasting time. Blue petals emerged as he started the steps of a sword dance.

"No... chance!" Limit cried out with wide eyes. He had no intention of dying in this place. "For me... I have a heart's desire!"

Everyone had a problem. The poor weren't the only ones who suffered. Limit had been born as the heir to one of the greatest families in the empire and had a significant duty. It was his duty to prove his talent and skills and to capture the envy of his people and the trust of the emperor. Yet as a young man, he had failed to fulfill his duty.

A heavenly genius had ruined his path. Piaro—his talent had always surpassed Limit's, and the enthusiasm of the people and the emperor's trust had only been directed toward him. Limit, who should've been in the brightest place, had been obscured by dark shadows. He had felt humiliated and pained.

Limit's life was plagued by wounds. Unlike Asmophel who could proudly declare that his goal was to go beyond Piaro, Limit had been a coward who didn't even dare put the name of Piaro in his mouth. Thus, he worked harder and practiced his swordsmanship. He worked solely to master techniques instead of being dazzled by the 'senses' or 'enlightenment' that the two geniuses spoke about.

"I... I have to prove that I've surpassed Piaro!"

He had vaguely speculated that Piaro was still alive. Nevertheless, he didn't chase Piaro in order to regain the qualifications that he had lost as a young man. He couldn't die in this place. Once again, he couldn't succumb to the barrier of a genius. He would surely survive and break the shackles of his heart by confronting and winning against Piaro. Limit, who was called a 'genius' by the people of the emperor, pledged and resisted the pangs in his heart to control his sword energy. He quickly restored his damaged body.

-He is a great guy.Focus.

"Flower." Grid's sword dance was completed and followed the best sword path. Simultaneously, the blue petals covered Limit while Braham's Lightning was triggered. The goal was to imprint as many marks on Limit as possible. However, Limit didn't back down. He crushed the petals falling like thunderbolts in the darkness. Concurrently, he deployed evasive movements. He captured the tip of Grid's sword that penetrated like a snake.

Then Iyarugt predicted the direction Limit evaded in. Iyarugt, who had been overworked every day he was with that crazy human Peak Sword, had managed to break through six times in total and had recovered more than half of his past strength. This meant that he wasn't the same as when he lost to Piaro.

"...Keuk?" Limit wondered why the exceptionally simple swordsmanship that was only fast previously had suddenly become magical. Had this person been hiding his skills? No, his eyes couldn't be deceived. This person had suddenly developed during the battle.

'Genius...' Limit glimpsed Piaro in Grid. Why did Grid accept Piaro and why did Piaro end up serving him? Limit knew the inside story.

'They fit together. The two of them recognized each other's talent at first sight...'

Then it happened the moment Limit misunderstood. Grid's sword cut Limit again.

[The target has received 14,900 damage.]

[...The black flames have exploded!]

[...A red thunderbolt has been summoned!]

Good. Luck followed Grid. There were only two successful attacks, but the weapon's options were already popping out.

'I can win.'

It wasn't complacent of Grid to increase his odds of winning because Iyarugt had joined him.

[The duration of immortality is over.]

'Finish it while Item Combination is maintained.'

Grid took a potion and wielded his sword again after confirming that the blood-sucking option of Elfin Stone's Ring was available once more. Iyarugt showed the three best sword paths, and Grid used Transcended Link Flower along one of them. Limit's body was covered in new wounds. Red blood scattered all over him, and Grid's health was rapidly restored. This was the power of the blood-sucking option.

Every time Limit received a new wound, the number of best sword paths that Iyarugt gave increased. As Limit weakened, Iyarugt saw more gaps. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the current Limit was in the palm of Iyarugt's hands.

"Die!" Grid cried out with two thoughts. It wasn't enough that Limit was the leader of the empress' faction which had brought Piaro and Asmophel profound pain in the past. He was now threatening the three dukes. Grid would never forgive Sword Duke Limit.

"Pinnacle Kill!"

It was the end. Hundreds of red lines wrapped around Limit, who staggered from the critical injury. Iyarugt told Grid that he could knock Limit down no matter where he attacked. Grid was still gaining momentum. He took a big step toward Limit. It was the precursor of Linked Kill Flower Pinnacle. The power of the four fusion sword dance that made even a yangban shrink back wasn't something that the strongest of the empire could bear. Grid was confident of victory as he started a storm of sword energy.

-Stop! Iyarugt hurriedly exclaimed.-It is a trap! Even if he will die soon, he is still a master. The more he is on the verge of dying, the more damage he will attempt to leave behind. It is impossible to reveal a complete gap.

It was as expected.

“Kukuk.” Facing Grid’s sword, Limit was laughing. The light particles, which had wrapped around Limit to heal him, were vibrating. It was the sign of an explosion. Driven to the edge of a cliff, Limit was aiming for mutual destruction. However, Grid wasn’t someone who would be hit by such means.

“It won’t work.”

A woven cloth appeared in front of Grid.

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“...?”

There was a saying about formality. Yet the king of a country pulling out a cloth and spreading it out around himself...? This was a sight that Limit had never imagined in his lifetime. Flap. In a moment of desperation, Grid unfolded the cloth. The explosion of light, that should’ve swallowed up Grid and Limit, was sucked into the cloth.

“...”

“...”

Silence flowed. From Limit, who had maintained a serious expression since he first appeared, to Biplonz who was watching the situation, Ke ong who was dozing off from boredom as the battle lengthened, the dukes, and the unidentified prisoners all over the place... Everyone in the Abyss briefly lost their wits.

It meant that the legacy of the legendary tailor was so great. Was there an unbelievable modifier in front of the name?

[Mysterious Cloth]

[Rating: Legendary]

Durability: None

A four-dimensional cloth that neutralizes damage of the ‘explosion’ type.

Once the cloth is unfolded at the explosion point, all the explosive energy is absorbed into the cloth.

Skill Cooldown Time: 10 minutes.]

“...It was an explosion caused by consuming Origin True Energy. It had the power to blow up even the gates of the imperial palace which is covered by all types of protective spells. Yet you blocked it?” The visibly shocked Limit murmured. Limit’s gaze was fixed on the cloth that Grid was holding, and he finally asked a question, “What is the identity of that artifact? Is it a treasure of a dragon?”

“You don’t need to know,” Grid declared coldly while recovering the cloth. He had no intention of kindly explaining it.

Duguen, duguen. Grid didn’t show it outwardly, but his heart was beating fast enough to explode. His fingertips, obscured by the darkness of the Abyss, were shaking. He was still dazed. After all, he would be dead if he had pulled it out even 0.1 seconds late. Coke would’ve also died, and Grid would’ve missed the opportunity to rescue the dukes. It would’ve been the worst.

'It would be better to have one more talent.'

Grid also had a surprisingly modest side to him. It was the side which involved talent. Talent—it was something that couldn't be obtained with effort. Grid knew this fact bitterly because he knew geniuses. A typical example of a genius was Kraugel. Grid knew the many ways that Kraugel was superior to himself, and he humbly accepted it. He admired and envied Kraugel.

However, there was only one area. Grid was proud that this 'item swap rate' was faster than Kraugel's. It was natural for Grid to be proud. He had overcome all types of crises and used more items than anyone else. Out of two billion players, the one who swapped items the most often was probably Grid. The speed at which items were swapped was bound to be tempered. The speed at which Grid identified, replaced, and wore items from the inventory was so fast that even Kraugel couldn't surpass him.

'Huhuhut...'

He was the only person in the world who could survive this situation. If Kraugel were in the same situation, he would die before managing to pull out the Mysterious Cloth. Grid was proud for a moment only to suddenly fall into reflection time. The only thing he could be proud of was the speed at which he swapped his items... Grid was thinking too modestly.

He clicked his tongue and pointed his sword at Limit again. Grid and Limit both knew it. This long fight was coming to an end. Limit had difficulty using his sword because of the consumption of Origin True Energy, and he barely managed to open his white lips.

"You're looking at me like you want to consume me. Yes, people like you won't understand me for the rest of your life."

"...?"

"I was born with the fate to be the best and I tried hard my whole life, but I had no talent. I was covered by the shade of the genius Piaro and was treated as the shame of my family."

"..."

"I won't forget my father's dying gaze on me, even on my deathbed."

They had been eyes filled with disappointment and resentment, yet they still pierced Limit's chest like a dagger.

"I wanted to be the best. I wanted to share my loyalty to the empire and the emperor as well as the friendship with my colleagues after becoming the best."

Things had progressed too far to postpone it. Limit just wanted to pull out the beast stuck in his chest. He had become an unfaithful traitor, an ignorant evil. It was irreversible. In the end, he was forced to hold the hand of the empress.

"If only I had been born a genius who saw reason instead of a criminal who didn't come to his senses... If I..."

"...?"

Limit was a very important figure in the empire. He would surely have a special story. Grid frowned once he heard what Limit was saying. It was strange to hear these words. A criminal who didn't come to his senses...? Just listening to them caused Grid to be in a bad mood. "I don't know what you want to say. Stop with the sophistry. Even a dumb idiot knows that he shouldn't betray his colleagues. They don't stab people in the back. You pushed Piaro and Asmophel into the abyss of despair and hurt the three dukes. You are corrupted in mind and spirit."

"...!" Limit's eyes, which had lost their light, suddenly grew bigger. He realized it. Everything was an excuse. Yes, he was just a warped human being. It was only a petty jealousy that made him deceive the royal family and rob Piaro and Asmophel of their lives. His expectations, disappointments, and resentments didn't exempt him from his sins.

Limit returned his sword to the sheath hanging from his waist. He became empty-handed and spoke in a lonely tone, "Kill me as painfully as possible. I don't deserve to find rest. Additionally, I hope you pass this onto Piaro and Asmophel if you get a chance in the future. I am sorry."

Limit's gaze was directed toward the prison behind Grid. This apology was for them as well. Limit was telling this to the dukes.

Grid was very surprised. Limit's eyes, which used to be self-righteous and arrogant, were as deep and clear as Stick's eyes. A man like Limit was accepting death on his own—this was a development Grid had never dreamed of. He wondered if Limit had also been affected by the Yatan Essence. However, the truth was unknown.

"...Overgeared King," Grenhal's voice rang out from the rear, "Your Majesty, please finish him off. If he survives here and is punished by His Majesty the Emperor, he isn't the only one who will be killed. His family will also be wiped out."

"..." Grid didn't have to ask which option was better. Grenhal had suffered lifelong distress for his failure to protect Piaro's family. Grid was at odds with Limit, but he didn't want to repeat the history of suffering. Grid spoke as casually as possible, "I intended to do so in the first place. I have to deal payback onto the enemies of my knights."

His mind felt a bit heavy. Originally, he should've slashed Limit's throat with a cheerful heart, but the conversation became poisonous. Grid took a deep breath and slowly approached Limit. It was a precursor of a sword dance. Limit faced the sword dance and seemed to hear music.

The ground around Grid started cracking. The transcendent energy that appeared in myths stirred the earth and the atmosphere. Some of the swirling air currents changed sharply and formed a vortex. It was the expression of Braham's Wind Cutter. The black-gold sword started to glow white as Weapon Enchant attached to Pinnacle was activated. The killing intent that couldn't be measured caused the skin of everyone present to become numb.

"Transcended Linked Kill Pinnacle."

It was the fifth sword dance that Grid had fused together. As far as single-target destructive skills were concerned, the ultimate technique that transcended Linked Kill Flower Pinnacle cut at Limit. It was a courtesy to Limit, not the 'Sword Duke.' Grid released it into the world for the first time as a courtesy for the opponent who at least respected his ability. He was thankful.

“...” Limit, who was suffering in pain since the very beginning, was liberated from his pain. His death was instantaneous and calm. The empire’s greatest talent turned to ash. Only one player defeated the Sword Duke.

“What?” Resh couldn’t say anything. This death was unrealistic for him, who had experienced Limit’s strength just a short time ago.

On the other hand, Coke formed two tight fists and accepted reality. “As expected of Grid... I knew he could do it.”

“...”

He knew Grid could do it? He believed that one player would defeat one of the strongest NPCs? Resh was frankly unconvinced. This was like a dream. However, it wasn’t a dream.

[The Saharan Empire’s duke ‘Sword Duke Limit’ has been defeated.]

[It is a great accomplishment that no one has achieved.]

[Your reputation throughout the continent has increased. You have acquired 3,000 reputation points.]

[The level of party leader ‘Grid’ has risen!]

[The ‘?’ of party leader ‘Grid’ has risen! It is a concept that you don’t understand yet.]

[The party leader ‘Grid’ has acquired the Star Sword.]

[The party leader ‘Grid’ has achieved the ‘First Step in Revenge.’]

[An unknown person has achieved level 400 for the first time.]

The world message rose after several notification windows. Resh could finally recognize the reality.

‘The best...!’ Resh’s eyes trembled as he gazed at Grid. He even got a strange sensation. What type of scenery was the world that Grid was looking at? Resh was curious.

[Your status has risen after a struggle with the strong. Your skin feels a bit harder.]

[The increase in status has created the passive skill ‘Skin of Transcendence.’]

[Congratulations! You are the first player to achieve level 400!]

[You have taken the title ‘Pioneer’ from someone unknown!]

[Pioneer]

[A 10% increase in character experience acquisition.

10% increase in rewards for discovering new places.

Access to the Tower of Wisdom.

* This is a title that only the foremost person can have. Keep in mind that it can be taken away by others at any time.]

'Ah.' Grid noticed it after reading the description of the Pioneer title. This originally belonged to Kraugel.

'...It's big.'

Despite feeling a bit regretful...

'Has he been sucking up this honey since the game started?'

It was both scandalous and thrilling. The notification windows were updated continuously.

[You have reached level 400 and achieved the fourth stats awakening!]

[For every point of stamina, health will increase by 30 and defense will increase by 1.2.]

[For every point of strength, health will increase by 9 and attack will increase by 0.8.]

[For every point of intelligence...]

.....

.....

[One of Pagma's Descendant's hidden pieces 'Sealed Ability' has been acquired.]

[The effect of the skill 'Mineral Creation' will change.]

[Mineral Creation]

[Create new minerals by mixing multiple minerals. You can now choose pavranium as a mineral to mix.

Pavranium itself is the essence of a great magician's knowledge, and you can now create new minerals on your own.

Time required to create minerals: Immediate.

Materials needed to create minerals: Five types of minerals, including pavranium.

Number of times that Mineral Creation can be used: 1.

* The weight of the mineral created is the same as the weight of the pavranium you currently have.

* After creating a new mineral, you can improve the mineral more effectively if you have the help of a great magician.]

"Ah..."

Item Combination was the skill that Grid gained upon reaching level 300. He didn't know what type of skill he would get this time, but it was better than he could've imagined.

"Hahat!"

Three years? No, was it four years? After reaching level 300, Grid took a really long time to reach level 400. Then it happened while he was smiling brightly and feeling so moved that think of a proper way to express his pleasure.

[The duration of Item Combination is over.]

The sword was separated. As Iyarugt started to return to his original position, his soul whispered, -You should beware of him.

“Who?”

-That demonkin.I don't know for sure, but I smell it.By the way, how long will I be with Peak Sword...

Iyarugt's words didn't last long. He was pulled by an irresistible force and returned.

“...What?”

Based on the tone, Iyarugt seemed to have a good relationship with Peak Sword. In the end, Grid turned to Biplonz, who was still leaning against the stone wall with his arms crossed. Hell's beast demonic beast was afraid of him, and Sword Demon Iyarugt was wary of him.

‘But he's not a bad person, so let's keep an eye on him.’

The immediate problem wasn't Biplonz but the three dukes. He was also curious about the other prisoners present, but he had to leave quickly in case Edan discovered Limit's death and came. “Biplonz, I'll come back next time. Please be safe until then. I'll give these keys back to you just in case.”

“I am embarrassed but thank you.”

Grid exchanged short goodbyes and escaped the Abyss with the dukes and Ke. Resh had already secured a list of prisoners, so the quest was a success. Simultaneously in the celestial palace, Grandmaster Zikfrector put aside the magic crystal ball he had been watching for a long time.

“It was interrupted by Limit.”

He hadn't expected Grid to win against a duke after becoming transcendent.

“I should've handled Limit in advance.”

No, no. It was unlikely Grid would break through the hydra considering how he struggled with Limit.

“I can only keep the promise next time.”

He had been waiting for hundreds of years. Waiting a bit longer wasn't a problem. A faint smile appeared on the grandmaster's face as he turned his gaze outside the window. It was a hundred-year-old smile.

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“Hold fast!”

Grid's movement speed reached the maximum as he escaped from the Abyss. The dukes' condition was severe, and he used all types of means and methods to escape. Grid wanted to return to Reinhardt and ask Ruby to treat them.

"Get lost!"

Grid killed the guards who blocked the way. His fourth stats awakening meant his attack power had increased by leaps and bounds. Every time the cooldown time ended, he used Quick Movements to overwhelm the guards while holding Basara in his arms.

"Truly a great sword!" Ke shouted while following Grid aboard Overgeared Corn. Saliva splashed from his mouth every time, causing Overgeared Corn's annoyance to reach the peak. He had to carry a male on his back, and this male was even splashing dirty saliva? Eventually, Overgeared Corn was unable to endure his anger and sped up, causing Ke's face to turn white.

"H-Hik! I'm dead! I'm going to die because of this horny thing!"

The stalactites hanging like icicles from the ceiling started to break. It was the aftermath of a collision with Ke's wide face.

"A-Aigoo, this guy..."

The 'dead' Ke finally fell flat. His face was swollen as he clung to Overgeared Corn's back and held his breath. Only then did the disheveled Overgeared Corn follow Grid along the safe path. It was a breathless advance.

"Pant... Pant..."

Then the group finally succeeded in leaving the Abyss.

"You must have suffered a lot. I will go to find my senior knight and finish the quest. Please don't worry about the rewards and hurry to leave."

"Thank you for this work in many ways."

"What are you saying? I'm the grateful one. Thanks to Grid, I cleared the quest. I am greatly indebted to you." There was no exaggeration in Resh's words.

This was a quest he shared with Grid and Coke, but he never would've been able to clear it without them. The demonkin Biplonz guarded the prison, and Sword Duke Limit had emerged after Biplonz was defeated. It would have been impossible to defeat them with the power of three high rankers. No, he wouldn't have even reached the prison. It would have been hard to break through the guards when there was a narrow path that only one person could pass through at a time. This had been really good luck. The relationship that he developed with Coke through the Chivalry community...

"I will surely repay your grace."

"First, buy us a meal. In any case, it is easy to meet people living in the same country." Coke smiled at Resh.

He wanted to get closer to Resh. Being in the same community meant they had the same interests. After all, Resh also had great strength, so it would be good if they became closer. Resh accepted it happily. "I'll treat you several times. It is an honor to be able to meet you."

"If you meet us and get caught by Peak Sword, there will be a big mess. He will swear at you the moment he knows you are Korean."

"Haha... I'll have to bear it."

"Good. Then I'll see you next time."

Grid also liked Resh. He was a good player who gave off a great impression and had a humble personality. Grid wanted to continue the relationship with Resh and invite him to the Overgeared Guild. However, it wasn't possible right now. Resh also had his own path.

Grid left these regrets behind and urged Coke, "Let's hurry, Coke."

The situation would become even harder if Edan's army came forward. They couldn't waste any more time. Yet at the moment that Grid turned his back to Resh... There was suddenly a harsh noise, and the ground shook violently. Soon after, a formation of horses appeared, covering the horizon. It wasn't thousands but tens of thousands of horses.

They were cavalry. Considering that the cost of raising one cavalryman was equal to the cost of raising 30 infantry, it was an unbelievable sight. The ranks of cavalry, that were so tight not even a needle could pass through, approached Grid's group.

"An army of the empire!"

"I knew it would be like this."

Coke was dazed while Ke showed a scathing reaction. Ke reached out to the tight-faced Grid. "Don't you know that the empire is an empire for a reason? The atrocities of the empire stemmed from its thoroughness. It is impossible to escape from the Abyss in the first place. Now let me see your sword. I want to see the sword before I am caught again."

"Break through," Grid just ignored Ke and gave Coke an order. Yet he stopped as he was about to summon Noe and his other pets.

"Lord Grenhal!"

"Lady Basara!"

"Morse, this idiot!"

The tens of thousands of cavalymen approaching Grid's party were the soldiers of the three dukes. In other words, armed forces of a noble entered the capital where the emperor lived. It was a taboo. This alone was a sin. That's why they were late. The retainers of Grenhal, Basara, and Morse rushed forward and knelt down tearfully in front of the dukes.

"I sensed something, but I couldn't run over right away!"

"Forgive our incompetence!"

“The imperial guards are chasing us! We need to escape straight away!”

“Morse, this asshole! I told you to come back to the estate first! You went through this mess because you didn’t listen to me!!”

“...”

Who was this woman who kept swearing at Morse? Could a retainer show such an attitude to a duke of the empire? Grid turned away from the seemingly angry woman and carefully laid Basara down.

“I am Overgeared King Grid.”

“I know.” An old man called Lanford came forward. Armed with old armor, he represented the army of the Basara family, and his name flashed with a gold color. Not only that, there seemed to be a named NPC in each duke’s household. “On the day that Duke Basara returned from the Ruins of the War God, she told me about Your Majesty thorough magic communication.”

The other dukes’ retainers were also aware of Grid. All of them respectfully bowed to Grid.

“This time, Your Majesty rescued everyone. We are deeply grateful.”

They weren’t stupid, so it was easy for them to guess the situation. Various circumstances explained the situation.

“Thank you very much! The Grenhal Duchy will never forget today’s grace!”

“Thank you very much! The Basara Duchy will never forget today’s grace!”

“Thank you very much. The same is true for the Morse Duchy.”

Tens of thousands of soldiers cried out as the dukes’ retainers bowed in front of King Grid. They were cries filled with various emotions. The plains shook, and sounds echoed through the entrance of the Abyss.

“I just helped my friends,” Grid responded as modestly as possible. In fact, he wanted to express his heart, but it wasn’t the right time. He should be patient for a more dramatic production.

“King Grid...” Grenhal was touched by Grid’s words without knowing the situation and trembled. Edan had blinded him, but Grenhal could imagine Grid’s dignified appearance in his head. This was a king of great character. It was obvious how much the people of the Overgeared Kingdom would love Grid.

“Sh... Shit...” Morse was unable to bear with the pain from his cut off limbs, and his eyes were red. This wasn’t the emperor their families had loyally served for generations. A person whom they had only known for a few days had saved them... Morse’s thoughts were complicated and confused in many ways.

Meanwhile, Basara was still dazed. Just like in the prison, she stared at the distant sky with her mouth open. In this midst of this atmosphere, the knights urged them, “We have to hurry back to the estate.”

They had to leave here quickly. They couldn’t fathom how things would turn out if there were a clash with imperial forces.

“Send a letter to the Rebecca Church right away. If the elders of the church take action, the dukes’ bodies might be restored a bit.”

Then it happened when the retainers were urging the soldiers to take care of the dukes.

“Let’s go to Reinhardt,” Grid spoke up.

“Why Reinhardt?”

Reinhardt was the capital of the Overgeared Kingdom. Why should they go there? In front of the confused retainers, Grid unwittingly made a proud expression as he explained, “My sister is the Saintess.”

“...!!”

“My sister will be able to heal them.”

“...!!”

“Of course, it will be very hard for my sister, but she will definitely make the sacrifice for my friends. It will be very hard, but she will surely do it.”

It was finally time to show off.

Grid prompted an answer from the astonished retainers, “Will you believe in me?”

“O-Of course!”

It was a situation where every straw needed to be grasped. Additionally, Overgeared King Grid could be trusted. So, the retainers nodded immediately.

Coke clicked his tongue inwardly. ‘People will be freaked out again...’

Resh and Ke were terrified.

‘The dukes’ soldiers, who might be charged with treason, are willing to go to the Overgeared Kingdom... The flow is unusual.’

‘Are the nobles of the empire so easily swayed by the king of another nation? Has the world gone crazy after decades?’

“It is really annoying,” 4th Imperial Prince Edan murmured. His face had long been distorted. “Why are you involved in imperial affairs?”

In the downstream of the Ballua River, Edan—who had been tracking Rachel back to her estate—had been very happy. If he succeeded in capturing Rachel, all his factors of anxiety would be eliminated. However, the plan failed because of the interference of a third party.

The Sword Saint—the black-haired man who wasn’t even on the same level as Piaro—had appeared to help Rachel. He knew the weaknesses of the magic machine and spread out his sword energy likes

clouds, interrupting them and dragging out the time. It had been a long time since the magic machines reached the limit of their operating duration and stopped working.

Edan had to pull out a sword and deal with Rachel himself. He was confident in winning a one-on-one match, but Kraugel's swordsmanship—which contained a mystery 'power despite being weak'—kept Edan at a disadvantage.

'I shouldn't have sent Limit.'

Just before arriving here, the detection magic identifying intruders in the Abyss was activated. Edan was forced to send the fastest moving Limit. That was the problem. It would've been better to go back after taking care of Rachel together. In any case, the Abyss was guarded by Biplonz, and he thought that was enough.

'I think this matter has become severely twisted.' Edan clicked his tongue and launched his red energy.

The target was Kraugel. Kraugel stepped back, but that was it. He didn't release the sword in his hand.

Edan's judgment was quick. "I have to go and clean up the shit."

Right now, Rachel's life wasn't important. Every minute was precious, so it would be a waste of time to punish the Sword Saint hindering him. Edan recovered his sword and said goodbye to Rachel, "You were lucky. Let's meet again next time."

"The next time we meet, you will be a traitor, not a prince."

"Kukuk, I don't think so."

Since when had things become so twisted? Who was behind him?

'What type of jerk...' Edan barely suppressed his anger and left. He first planned to meet the grandmaster.

Soon there were only two people left. Rachel asked Kraugel, "How did you know to come and help me?"

"Master gave me a hint on the way back from beating Berith."

He stated that he felt a strong red energy. It was unknown why, but Kirinus was very sensitive to the blood of the imperial family and knew the situation occurring inside the royal court. In the worst case, the dukes might suffer because someone had witnessed the dukes and Piaro together. Thus, he was to go to the capital and help them. This was the content of the hidden quest Kraugel had received. He wasn't able to protect the other three dukes, but he was glad that he could protect Rachel.

'...The rest.'

Kraugel didn't know why he had this idea that Grid would've rescued the remaining dukes. The reason for this feeling was Grid's increase in level, which didn't rise even after the Berith raid.

'I will reach level 500 and 600 faster.'

Kraugel had been the first player to reach level 100, and he obtained the Pioneer title. He had also been the first to achieve level 200 and 300. Now things had changed. He lost the benefits he'd had for a long time. Even so, why...?

Kraugel felt more pleased than deprived. It was more appropriate to say that his passion was ignited.

[Hidden Quest ★Support the Dukes ★ has been cleared.]

[You have helped one duke.]

[You have gained one level from the quest reward.]

[The quest rewards...]

....

...