

Leveling with the Gods

Chapter 12

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Choi JaeHyun checked the time. Looking over at the gate, he could see it slowly turning red.

‘There really isn’t a lot of time left now.’

Once the gate becomes a bright, crimson red, people will be able to move onto the next stage of the Tutorial. Of course, this only applied to people who met the requirements.

‘I have 45.’

He still needed five more to reach 50 essence. He had two and a half hours. If he hustled and bustled, he might be able to obtain them. He even leveled up quite a bit, so hunting had gotten that much easier.

However, there was no guarantee he’d actually obtain five more. That’s why he came up with a plan, but...

“Everyone else had the same thought.”

A lot of people had gathered around the center of the safe zone. They either observed what the others were up to from a distance, or they tried to make some awkward conversation.

“I’m not surprised. If they still ain’t got it, this is their only option,” said DooShik.

“Hey, how many you got?” JaeHyun asked DooShik, who had been following him around the entire 3rd Tutorial like a younger brother.

After quickly counting his essence, DooShik replied, “I got 42 total.”

“Eight short... So there’s no other way, huh.”

The drop rate for essence was abysmal. You were lucky to obtain even one after fighting an entire horde of monsters. Zombies, the weakest monsters, had a drop rate of less than one out of 20.

‘This mission is absolutely brutal.’

The mission was hard to beat just by hunting. That's why all these people were gathered here. The second the gate opened, they planned on stealing other people's essence and dashing to the next Tutorial. So for now, they remained still.

"They don't seem like they plan on acting any time soon."

"They'll probably start once the gate opens."

There were 30 minutes remaining till the gate activated. Whoever attacked first would become the center of attention, making enemies out of everyone else.

'As soon as the gate activates, steal and dash,' JaeHyun thought to himself, while keeping a lookout for the group at the opposite end of the safe zone.

They were the only people that were closely grouped up near the gate. The largest faction in the 3rd Tutorial.

"Hyung-nim,*" DooShik spoke.

*TL/N: Hyung-nim means older brother, and it's a respectful way Korean men call men older than them. It is also commonly used in gangs to address people who are higher up in hierarchy.

"Yeah?"

"That guy. Doesn't he look like he's watching us?"

JaeHyun shook his head at DooShik's question. "Well, it can't be helped. We're not exactly friends. We even fought them a while back."

"What should we do?"

"They far outnumber us, so for now let's just watch. There's no point in fighting right now."

"Do you think they're also short on essence, hyung-nim?"

"A few of them might have enough, but most of them probably don't."

"Then why would they be here?"

"Maybe to help their companions?"

"Do you really think those bastards have that kind of camaraderie, hyung-nim?"

“It’s because it’s likely this is not the end. If there was a 3rd, there’s probably a 4th, and maybe a 5th or 6th, even.

“Shit...” DooShik didn’t like thinking about that possibility.

Tap, tap—

Someone from the large group started walking towards Choi JaeHyun, grabbing everyone’s attention.

‘Kim MyungHoon.’

He was the one leading the largest faction. He was not only large in size and a good fighter, but he was also extremely charismatic with his silver tongue.

JaeHyun and DooShik, with two other guys as the core members, managed to form a group of over 20 people, but MyungHoon managed to create a much larger group.

At first, he only had 30 people, but MyungHoon was clearly focused on gathering people during the Tutorial. His group had at least 50 people now, making him the most influential person in the Tutorial.

“Long time, no see. What’s it been, two days?” MyungHoon said with a bright tone.

“I don’t think we’re so friendly enough to be sharing such warm greetings,” JaeHyun coldly replied back.

The two groups had already gone up against each other. They were pretty evenly matched in numbers back then, so it only ended as a minor incident. But things had changed, and MyungHoon was well aware of that fact.

“Gosh. You’re still as prideful as ever, even when you know what’ll happen.”

JaeHyun tried to keep his face stoic, watching MyungHoon smile smugly. Nothing good could come from facing off against them right now. It was clear who was the top dog and who was the underdog.

Seeing that JaeHyun was remaining silent, MyungHoon continued. “You know the position you’re in, right?”

“What position would that be?”

“Don’t you think it’ll become a bloodbath at 2 o’clock? With everyone being short on essence and whatnot.”

JaeHyun bit his lip at MyungHoon's words. He had it all wrong. While some people were thoughtlessly hunting for essence, others probably gathered essence by stealing it from others. Meanwhile, MyungHoon had thought things through far ahead of time.

'So he was preparing for this moment.'

MyungHoon had spent the last 70 hours gathering people. And in the last two hours, he planned on taking advantage of the fact that you had to go through the gate to reach the next Tutorial—a scheme to snatch up essence at the final moment.

'He really is a cunning bastard.'

JaeHyun scoped out MyungHoon's group. Approximately 50 people. In contrast, he only had about 20 people on his side. There were also a handful of small groups that weren't associated with any faction, but it was unrealistic to expect them to be able to join forces at the last minute.

"... How much do you guys need?"

"Well, we have so many mouths to feed. So we need about 700 more."

"700?"

That was far too large a number. If he had requested 100, JaeHyun would have given them up to avoid a confrontation, but this ruled out that option.

'We barely have 800 essence.'

It was a ridiculous request. If they surrendered 700 essence, they'd be left with basically nothing. JaeHyun was conflicted, and MyungHoon piggybacked off of that.

"Just give us 400. Then we'll leave you guys alone."

"400?"

"Yeah, we'll figure out the rest ourselves."

They were threatening to take only half. However, even that was too generous a concession.

'It'll be a full-on confrontation if we reject his offer.' JaeHyun looked at DooShik and his companions.

'If that's the case...'

That was when someone entered the safe zone.

“Sorry. ‘Scuse me.”

“Coming through.”

Breaking through the crowd, a male-female duo was heading towards the center of the safe zone. They were bold without any fear, cutting past MyungHoon and his gang.

‘Who are these guys?’

They were familiar faces. They remembered seeing them at least once, but they hadn’t left a lasting impression.

No, that only applied to one of them.

‘He’s...’

It was a man holding a large box. He had an unforgettable face. Black hair with a short undercut, sharp jawline, and clear black eyes. The only participant to have roamed outside the safe zone in the 2nd Tutorial...

It was YuWon.

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Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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YuWon’s appearance silenced the crowd.

MyungHoon and JaeHyun temporarily halted their dick-measuring contest because YuWon’s presence was the ultimate wild card in this fight.

There was no one in the Hongdae sector who didn’t know YuWon. He freely entered and left the safe zone even before the 3rd Tutorial started, to hunt monsters. The scene of him stomping an Earthworm to death, a creature that everyone feared, was enough to put him in the spotlight.

Thud—

YuWon walked over to the center of the safe zone and placed down a box.

The first person to welcome YuWon's return was MyungHoon.

"Hey man, I haven't seen you in a few days. Where have you been?"

YuWon looked over at MyungHoon approaching him. When he locked eyes with MyungHoon, he noticed the bloodthirst. MyungHoon wasn't even smiling anymore, radiating hostility at YuWon.

"Well, you know, I had things to do."

"So, did you gather enough?"

"Is the sky blue?"

MyungHoon nodded his head at YuWon's response. He honestly wasn't surprised. YuWon made his skills clear starting from the 1st Tutorial, so MyungHoon expected him to easily gather enough essence by hunting.

"How many did you collect?"

"Ah, just a sec, please."

Some of MyungHoon's companions came over. MyungHoon looked over and saw the worry in his companions' expressions.

"Let's not make him our enemy. Who knows what level he is?"

"He's right. Let's just leave him be."

"Yeah. MyungHoon, I get how you're feeling, but..."

On top of his companions, even SeungChan,* his friend that was there from the beginning, tried to stop him. This infuriated MyungHoon.

*TL/N: Not to be confused with SeongChan, the guy YuWon helped.

"Are you all really scared of one guy?"

"It's not that we're scared. I'm just saying we can just take essence from other people. Not only will it be easier to gang up on others, but we'll also be able to obtain more."

"Exactly. At most, he probably only has 50, so why should we poke the beehive?"

They were right. The condition to pass the 3rd Tutorial was collecting 50 essence. It would be much easier facing off against a couple of randos with 30-40 essence rather than fighting YuWon for 50.

‘Logically speaking, it would be best to avoid any unnecessary fights here...’

Before MyungHoon could finish his train of thought, YuWon flipped over his inventory pouch.

Pooour—

Plip, plop, plop—

“...!”

“Th-This crazy bastard...!”

Countless marbles started pouring into the large box. Seeing a box get filled to the brim with essence was enough to make all the participants lose their minds.

‘There’s gotta be at least a thousand...!’

It was a metric fuckton.

It wasn’t just the people who were in the safe zone who were shocked. This also caught the attention of the people who were waiting for the gate to open from afar. And one by one, the people who were keeping their distance gathered around.

MyungHoon asked, “... Are you all still of the same opinion?”

There was no answer. It couldn’t be helped. No matter how strong YuWon might be, he was still only a single individual. Not only did he possess far more essence, it seemed like a safer option to only fight YuWon versus JaeHyun’s entire group.

The silence from his companions put a sly smile on MyungHoon’s face.

‘I can do this.’

Honestly, MyungHoon was hesitant to fight YuWon mano a mano. Maybe if it was a fist fight, but he was well aware how skilled YuWon was with a knife. But that was only in a one-on-one scenario.

MyungHoon had a group that numbered 50, a number that even YuWon shouldn’t be able to handle. So he got even closer to YuWon.

“Wow. You really got a lot.”

MyungHoon was now close enough to see the crystals clearly. And as he took another step...

“Look closely at the floor.”

YuWon pointed to the ground, and MyungHoon’s eyes naturally followed.

‘A line?’

A line had appeared on the floor out of nowhere.

‘When did this get here?’

The line drew a circle around YuWon.

After seeing MyungHoon stop in his tracks, YuWon looked around at the other greedy-eyed participants.

“You all need this, right?”

They were all desperate. The countless essence in the box was enough to attract the attention of all the participants, magnifying their desperation.

YuWon knew their feelings very well. No one wanted to die here.

“I don’t need it. I already have more than enough.”

YuWon’s words made someone come forward, shouting, “Then, I’ll gladly—!”

YuWon cut him off. “But it’s not free.”

He raised his index finger.

“100 points each.”

YuWon then pointed at the line on the floor.

“If you want to buy any, first ask for my permission before you enter the circle.”

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