

Gourmet 221

Chapter 221: How to Make Demigod Artifacts

Ali still could not figure out Minhyuk's identity. However, he could tell with just that single smile. He thought, 'This person... He's special...'

Ali felt like he was looking at the top student in school. For some reason, the situation before with Kentaro and the rest of the players from all over the globe felt like they were envious and jealous students that were staring at the top student while saying...

'Is it fun to just study like that~?'

'Eyy, life is not all about studying.'

'Have some fun!'

They would then looked at him with pity. Was this how it felt to be a top student in school??The more Ali thought like that, the better he felt. Even if they told him those things, he did not bother with them too much. After all, he was a strong person too.

'Minhyuk probably feels like that...'

Ali only saw Minhyuk hunting the ancient warriors, but he had a strange intuition.

Then, Minhyuk said, "Let's quickly climb up too. I'll take the lead! I'm much stronger than I look!"

"Ah, yes!"

Ali liked Minhyuk very much. In fact, there was a fleeting moment when he also thought that it would be beneficial to abandon Minhyuk and join the others. That was the only way that he would be able to enter the Hall of Kings. However, he did not do so.

The two of them began their trek up the mountain. Ali, while hunting the other mobs, could see that the ancient warriors' appearances were increasing in frequency. Even the numbers of the ancient soldiers were also increasing.

"There are too many ancient warriors."

The difficulty had increased just like before. There were as many as three ancient warriors now. Ali once again used Great Undead Boom to deal with the mobs surrounding him. The only problem was the ancient warriors. He was not able to kill them since their high magic defense had reduced the success rate of the skill to an abysmal degree.

At that moment, Minhyuk's sword suddenly glowed red. Then, he fired the power that he had gathered.

[Splitting Sword.]

[Two powerful red swords with an additional 115% attack?power will soar and fly towards your enemy.]

Shweeeek!

As soon as Minhyuk slashed his sword down, a crescent sword light cut through an ancient warrior. Then he swept his sword horizontally.

Shweeeeek!

A quick and fast sword light immediately cut an ancient warrior in two. After hunting two ancient warriors in quick succession, Minhyuk moved quickly to attack the rest of the ancient warriors.

[Intangible Sword.]

[Your sword strike has ignored all of the enemy's defenses.]

Stab!

“Keuhaaaack!”

Minhyuk's sword stabbed through the ancient warrior's thick full plate armor so easily that it looked like he was just poking tofu with a chopstick. Minhyuk then quickly pulled his sword out and swung it again.

[Lightning]

[Two strikes!]

Bang! Bang!

Two lightning strikes fell down from the sky and quickly devoured the ancient warriors.

‘...Strong. He's very strong. What happened earlier wasn't just a coincidence,’ Ali thought, pupils shaking wildly as he looked at Minhyuk. Sweat had pooled in his hands, but he was still grinning widely.

‘So, my friend is very strong!’

Ali looked around. They were the only two people in this area. It seemed like they were the fastest. Then, he saw a group chasing behind them. It was none other than Kentaro and his team members.

‘How can this be...!’ Kentaro thought frantically as he chased behind Minhyuk and Ali. He could see Ali casting AOE magic while Minhyuk would dash forward and slash away at the ancient warriors which had high magical defense.

Kentaro knew that it was difficult to deal with the ancient warrior with his strength alone, since it had a high physical and magical defense. However, the mysterious and supposedly useless player whom he saw earlier was hunting and killing those ancient warriors at a pace that was faster than his.

“That player from earlier... He's much stronger than what I thought.”

“...I know. But we'll definitely get there ahead of them. The summit of Berest Mountains is divided into three sections. The first section is where soldiers flock like this. The second section is a trick section. It's the section that is infested with poison.

The third section is the section where the Ancient Monarch is located. I know that we'll be able to pass through the second section faster than they are."

"Oh. Really?"

"Yes. I climbed the Berest Mountains before, you know? So, I'm fully prepared for the poison in the second section. It's going to be harder than before, but I think it's still possible."

"As expected of Kentaro."

"I trust Kentaro!"

Kentaro smiled deeply. He believed that even if they were ahead of them right now, they would still arrive later than them in the end. No, perhaps even before the end.

'That mage's MP will run out soon, right?'

Kentaro felt excited again by the words of his party members. Shortly after, he could hear the sounds from above them.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Fwiiiiiiiiiiish—

"There are a lot of tricks and poisons. Perhaps the two of them are not able to move forward because of a powerful poison and curse," Kentaro said, smiling smugly.

Barmas, the archer player, opened his 'God's Eye'.

[God's Eye.]

[You can see one kilometer ahead of you.]

Barmas was an archer so he could use God's Eye to locate and shoot his enemies from a distance.

"Gasp!"

"What's wrong?"

"What's the problem?"

The white of Barmas' eyes were dyed black which allowed him to see the scene in front of him. However, what he saw shocked him. He did not answer the questions of the people with him. No, it was not that he did not want to answer, it was because he was counting.

"8 seconds, 9 seconds, 10 seconds, 11 seconds, 12 seconds..."

"...?"

"Barmas?"

"41 seconds..."

Barmas' blackened eyes slowly returned to their original color.

“Why were you counting the seconds just now?”

Hearing Kentaro’s words, Barmas’ expression turned complex as he looked up the mountains. Then, he said, “...It’s the time it took for them to move out of the second section to a place that is devoid of tricks and poisons.”

“...!”

Then, the notifications rang.

[The Guardians’ Tower shines strongly.]

[The team that arrived first at the site where the Ancient Monarch is resting will get a special score.]

[Each team’s score will now be displayed.]

“...!”

Kentaro just realized that what Barmas said a while ago was the truth.

As soon as the first team reached the Ancient Monarch, all of the teams’ scores would be posted. The scoreboard would not show the players’ nicknames, but they could only set the name of the team that entered the passageway. They could even place ‘anonymous’ on it. If they set it as anonymous, then the scoreboard would show the number of the passageway that they entered.

‘We’re in passageway 5 right now.’

[Passageway 5. 941 points.]

However, Kentaro was left speechless when he saw the score of the number one in the scoreboard.

“Cr...crazy...!”

[Korea Number One. 6,413 points.]

Kentaro realized that those two men, those Koreans, had started to go wild. Their score was completely ridiculous.

‘What in the world will their rewards be if their score is like that!’

When he saw the team’s name again, Kentaro could not help but clench his fists tightly.

‘Korea Number One... Korea... Number One...!’

It was clear to him that those words were aimed at them.

Then, Barmas said, “Oh, I forgot to mention, that Level 355 player is holding a frying pan.”

Kentaro’s eyes widened in shock. He said, ‘I... I missed the best player in Korea...?’

Five minutes ago.

Ali and Minhyuk were hunting the ancient soldiers and warriors when Ali suddenly felt an unusual energy up ahead.

[Scan]

[Detects nearby hazards and dangers.]

Scan was a magical skill that could inform the player about the potential dangers around them. It was a kind of detection skill but the only problem was that it could not exactly pinpoint the location of the danger. However, it was possible to detect all types of dangers.

“There are plenty of traps, poisons and curses everywhere. B...but this is not supposed to be this bad...!”

Minhyuk stepped forward and asked, “Can you do a shield?”

“I can do it. But why...?”

“I’ll stop the traps, curses and poisons from the front. Ali, you use the shield to protect yourself and the rear.”

“Wh...what are you...”

“Ali.” Minhyuk called out to him in a soft and gentle voice.

“...?”

“I’m also a citizen of our country.”

Ali was speechless. Of course, the same was true for him. When Ali decided to partner with Minhyuk, the other global players giggled and mocked them. Sometimes, he felt both bad and furious when others mocked his country, compared to when they mocked him.

“Shouldn’t we show them what kind of country Korea is?”

Ali wanted to tell him that it was too reckless. However, before he could do so, Minhyuk pulled out the rapier on his back. The rapier suddenly turned into a frying pan as Minhyuk charged forward.

Baaaaaaang—!

A huge fire suddenly erupted right next to Minhyuk.

Clang!

Minhyuk hit the incoming magical attack with his frying pan.

[Magical Reflection.]

[You have returned the magical attack back to your enemy.]

[You have returned the magical attack back to your enemy.]

[You have fended off a trick.]

[You have acquired 25 team points.]

[You have acquired 25 team points.]

[Each person will gain 10 individual points.]

Their score continued to increase with every action they took. The magic was easily blown away. Then, a series of curses and poisons began to pour towards Minhyuk.

[Ancient Wind Poison]

[The poison will clog your airways and block your breathing.]

[You have an invincible body that can ignore and resist all abnormal states.]

[You have resisted an abnormal state.]

[The Curse of the Ancient Witch Parama]

[Auditory and visual hallucinations derived from your fear will descend upon you.]

[You have an invincible body that can ignore and resist all abnormal states.]

No poison or curse could harm Minhyuk thanks to his invincible body. When Ali saw this, he was astonished.

‘Ah... So this is why...!’

Ali was also a high-leveled ranker, so he immediately knew what he needed to do. A pike from a powerful trap suddenly flew straight towards Minhyuk’s back. Ali’s magic was cast when he reached out his hands.

[Dark Shield]

[A black shield that defends against an enemy attack.]

Crack, crack, crack—

Bang!

Clang!

Minhyuk used his frying pan to defend against the magic that flew towards them.

Bang! Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

“Dark Shield! Dark Shield! Dark Shield!”

Clang, clang, clang, clang!

It was a fantastic combination. All of the attacks that slipped past Minhyuk’s defenses would be covered by Ali’s dark shield. Minhyuk would run in front as he fended off countless traps, poisons and curses, while Ali stretched his hands to protect him with magic from behind.

If other players saw Ali, they would definitely be in shock. The speed of reaction and casting magic was too ridiculous. Anyone would think that this was ridiculous. After all, not anyone could read the attack and quickly counter it with magic. There might be some that could read the speed of attacks, but there were only few gamers that had reflexes that were fast enough to respond to such a speed.

However, Ali was able to do it. Minhyuk was the same. A fantastic combination was created between Minhyuk, the strongest close combat player in the country, and Ali, the strongest mage player in the country. Not only were they the best combination, they were friends.

In just 40 seconds, they were able to fend off and dispel all the tricks, curses and poisons that were thrown at them. The pair then heard the notification about their scores.

[The Guardians’ Tower shines strongly.]

[The team that arrived first at the site where the Ancient Monarch is resting will get a special score.]

[Each team's score will now be displayed.]

Ali and Minhyuk both nodded. They could see the summit in front of them. The Ancient Monarch was just in front of them.

Then, Ali asked, "Should we name our team?"

"Yes. I think we should name it."

"Hmm. I'm still very angry that they ignored us earlier."

Minhyuk nodded with a wry smile when he heard Ali's words, and said, "Then, let's just name the team as Korea Number One."

"Ah. That's nice."

Ali grinned widely.

"Our Korea is the best!"

This was how the team Korea Number One was created. Then, the two people stepped forward together. They finally arrived at the top of the mountains.

As soon as they stepped forward, they saw three sculptures lying on an altar. Originally, there should only be the head sculpture in here. This time, there were two additional sculptures placed beside it. The arms and the legs.

The three sculptures suddenly floated in the air as the Ancient Monarch began to take shape. His eyes were glaring sharply from under his helmet as his torn red cape that was hanging on his shining golden armor fluttered in the wind.

"Me... Please kill me... I've been suffering from the demon... save me..."

Before his body took shape, he pleaded with them urgently. However, his eyes began to turn black as he shouted, "Dieeeeeeeeeee!"

A great force shot out from the Monarch's sword and like a firework, it bloomed in the sky. The beams of light created by the firework-like energy fell down.

[The Monarch's Power]

[The power of the Monarch stretches over all of Berest Mountains.]

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Explosions resounded from all over the place as the notifications rang in their heads.

[The Guardians' Tower's light has weakened.]

[The team in Passageway 1 has been wiped out.]

[The team in Passageway 8 has been wiped out.]

[The team in Passageway 6 has been wiped out.]

A ridiculously strong being had descended upon them.

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The notifications did not end there.

[Mass Teleport]

[The Monarch summons all of his opponents.]

Light flashed everywhere as the players began to appear one by one.

“Cough!”

“Treatment! Priests! Hurry up! Use heal!”

“Shit, f*ck!! He’s too strong!!”

“What priest?! All the priests and mages are dead now!!”

“Everyone else from my team is annihilated, except me?!”

“Is this a bug? How can we clear this?!”

The players were all flustered and confused. Kentaro, whose armor had turned into rags, stood firm as he maintained his defensive posture by crossing his katanas together.

‘This... We’re supposed to break this...?’ Kentaro thought with a frown. Something had gone wrong, terribly wrong.

‘Isn’t this mob impossible to hunt as of the moment?’

In playing Athenae, most of the players continued to level up. As their level grew, their strength would also grow. As a result of this, Athenae continued to provide new updates so the players would not get bored or tired of the game as they set new goals for themselves. However, the Ancient Monarch in front of them had gone beyond that category. Kentaro estimated that the tankers present now would only be able to hunt the Ancient Monarch six months later. To think that Athenae actually put a boss mob like this here?

‘Do you want us all to die?’

Looking around, Kentaro could see that most of the players were out of commission with just the blow from earlier. Most of them had lost their armor’s durability, and even the wounded players had to try and survive on their own after the priests were forced to log out. There was 20 surviving players. However, Kentaro could see that there were still two people that were standing strong. They were none other than Minhyuk and Ali.

The first strike of the Monarch’s power was meant to strike the other players, and not the two people in front of him. Just then, the Ancient Monarch swung his sword again.

“Repent with your deaths! Foolish men who are against me!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

As soon as the sword struck out, the ground blew up and rubble shot out at the unprepared players.

Grrrrrrrr!

“Keuheuk!”

“Keuhack!”

The players let out shrieks. However, that did not mean that those players were just going to be pushed back so easily. They quickly came back to their senses.

“Kentaro! Give an order!”

“You have experience hunting him once, right? We’ll trust your orders!”

Their teams might be different, but every one of them had realized that this was not the time to vie for scores nor squabble for contributions. All they needed to worry about was whether they could survive and not be forced to log out.

“Archers, pull back and continue to deal damage. Tankers! Step forward and damage dealers follow right behind them. Use all of your skills and don’t hold back on anything! The moment we try to save just one skill, we will all be annihilated!”

“Yes!”

“Yes!”

The players quickly moved to follow his instructions.

[Wind Arrow!]

[Piercing Arrow!]

[Homing Shot!]

[One Shot!]

Twang, twang, twang, twang, twang, twang!

The arrows filled with strong power shot straight towards the Ancient Monarch. At that moment, a mysterious golden blade appeared out of thin air before ripping the arrows in half. Then, the Ancient Monarch began to run.

“Tankers!” Kentaro shouted hurriedly.

“Keuwoooooo!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaa!”

The tankers’ bodies started to harden.

[Golem’s Heart.]

[Your entire body will become as firm as an Iron Golem.]

[Active Endurance.]

[HP increases by 180%.]

[Gold Knight.]

[The glittering golden armor increases your defense.]

Bang!

The player named Max clashed with the dashing Ancient Monarch with his large square shield. Just a moment ago, Max was feeling happy after using his ability 'Golem's Heart' to make his body as hard as stone. He thought, 'If I block this boss in front of the world players... I will be a hero!'

As a tanker, Max was more confident than anyone else about his defense. They were extremely high and his artifacts were also splendid.

Bang!

The moment the Ancient Monarch's sword collided with his large square shield...

"Keuk!"

...Max grinned. As he expected, his square shield was impregnable. He had personally commissioned a dwarf to make this Manir's Absolute Shield!

Unfortunately, something unexpected happened. Something was rising out of the Ancient Monarch sword straight towards Max's square shield.

"Hiiik?!"

Max was frightened. Looking closely, the thing rushing straight towards him was a root of the tree. That was when he realized that the Ancient Monarch could freely control the surrounding ground, plants, and trees. Then, the tree roots began to tighten on the square shield.

Cra, crack!

"...Cr...crazy!"

Since Max's artifact had an infinite durability, no matter what happened to it, it would reset and return back to normal after 24 hours. However, this was the first time that he had seen this happen. Then, the Ancient Monarch swung his sword.

Bang!

Sand gushed out with every brandish of his sword. As soon as the sand touched their skin, it began to heat up.

"Keuaaaaaaack!" Max shrieked.

The two other players that tried to block the Ancient Monarch from behind him were also caught by surprise. This was because the roots of the trees rose like tentacles and had broken through their high defenses, penetrating through their bodies. That was not the end of it.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

A powerful explosion broke out, shattering their bodies to pieces.

"Sh... shit! This f*cker!"

"H... how can we kill something like that!"

“This is crazy! I can’t be logged out!!”

The players shrieked in panic. Since they were high-leveled players, they would receive higher penalties compared to other players. Even the thought of their artifacts dropping upon their deaths had made them dizzy.

Shweeeeeek—

A powerful force shot up through the sky. When Kentaro saw such a powerful force, he could not help but despair.

‘We can’t stop that, this...’

Kentaro felt like they would be forced to log out right at this very moment. The same was true for the other players. The force split in the air and flew in all directions as it aimed for the players.

At that moment...

[Compress.]

[Drags all players in one place.]

...Black Mage Ali brandished his staff. All of the players were dragged by the power that Ali shot out and were firmly gathered behind him. Then, another powerful force shot out from Ali’s staff as it formed a protective barrier around them.

“Barrier.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The players were shocked.

Barrier was the highest evolution that the shield skill could achieve. This skill could form a protective field that was ten times stronger than the normal shield. However, as a penalty, the mage and the people that he was protecting would not be able to use any ability or even prepare for combat while still under the protection of the barrier.

The barrier quietly surrounded the surviving players.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

The power of the Ancient Monarch struck fiercely against the barrier. However, surprisingly enough, there were no cracks that appeared on the barrier.

The players were well aware that Alex, the world’s number one mage, should not have been able to learn the Tier Eight Magic, Barrier. This was why the players were all in shock.

Then, Ali said, “I didn’t let you live because I liked you. It’s just because we need to have a lot of people to help us.”

Kentaro gulped dryly at Ali's words. At that moment, they saw Ali look somewhere else. There was a man who was standing outside the barrier.

"Like the Wind."

If they were inside the Barrier, they would be protected under a shield, but once they were outside the Barrier, they would lose all of this protection. However, the penalty that stopped them from using any ability, would also disappear.

The man appeared in front of the Ancient Monarch in an instant. Then, he used a skill.

"Rampant Sword."

The Rampant Sword that would last for 14 seconds! The skill that Minhyuk used began to create dozens of sword lights. These sword lights immediately attacked the Ancient Monarch.

Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab, stab—

Twang, twang, twang, twang!

[Critical Strike!]

[Intangible Sword.]

[Your sword strike has ignored all of the enemy's defenses.]

Spurt!

Blood spurted out as the sword light penetrated through the Ancient Monarch's thick and sturdy full plate armor.

"Keuaaaack! You, little bastard!"

Vwoooooong!

The Ancient Monarch wielded his sword. However, Minhyuk just defended lightly, he was not backing down. It even seemed like he was continuously pushing the Ancient Monarch back.

"..."

Kentaro was left speechless.

"Crazy...!"

The same was true for Ali. Ali already knew that Minhyuk was strong, but he did not expect his strength to reach this extent. It was hard for anyone to gauge someone's level when they were fighting against relatively weak opponents. However, they would be able to see the true power of that person once they fought against an extremely strong adversary.

Baaaang!

At that moment, the roots of the tree that were wrapped around the Ancient Monarch's body stretched forward as it shot out towards Minhyuk. The Rampant Sword chopped off the incoming roots, but there were still gaps that allowed it to gain access to Minhyuk's body.

That was the moment when Beanie appeared.

"Oink!"

With its flipping blade, Beanie chipped away at the incoming roots at a high speed. Then, it grabbed Minhyuk's arm as it urged him to spin it around, before kicking off Minhyuk's arm.

"Oiiiiiiiink!"

Beanie's small body flew straight towards the Ancient Monarch. It continued to attack while skillfully avoiding the roots trying to catch him.

Clang!

Thanks to Beanie's buffs, Minhyuk's speed increased again. It was at that moment when the Barrier disappeared.

"Let's go!"

"Run!"

The global players began to run forward, following Minhyuk's lead. Kentaro clasped his hands as he placed his two index fingers together.

Poing!

Kentaro suddenly became three as he continued towards the Ancient Monarch. All of the players prepared their attacks as Minhyuk silently fought in front of them.

"I'm... the Monarch...! The Monarch... who can shake the world with just a swing of my arms! I am stronger and greater than anything... I won't lose to such puny little punks like you!"

Minhyuk did not answer the words of the Ancient Monarch. Then, the Ancient Monarch roared loudly.

"Keuaaaaaaaaaaack!"

"Keup!"

"Ack!"

"Ugh!"

"Keok!"

All the players screamed. It was because of the notification that popped in front of them.

[Monarch's Roar.]

[Your magic and skills will be unavailable for five minutes.]

"...!"

'This is a failure.'

The strength of the high-leveled players might be influenced by their stats and items, but the biggest influence and contributor to their strength were their magic and skills. Their skills and magic would

grow together with their levels. For example, a Tier One Mage would only be able to summon a fireball the size of a fist, but Ali could summon a giant fireball by using Hellfire.

‘You’re telling me that all of our skills and magic are out of commission?’

Kentaro’s clones that were running with him also scattered and disappeared.

‘That person will die now...’

Kentaro sighed deeply. The hunt for the Ancient Monarch was a disaster and there was only one man who was facing the fiercely monstrous Ancient Monarch.

The Ancient Monarch fiercely struck the ground with his fists. Then, at that moment...

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

...A loud and powerful explosion engulfed the players.

“Keuhaaaaack!”

“Kaahaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaack!”

“Keup!!!”

Kentaro saved Ali by flinging him away. He said, “I’ve repaid the life that you saved once.”

Ali stared at Kentaro before looking around. Except for one Chinese player, Ali, Kentaro, and Minhyuk, all the other players were forced to log out. He saw the remaining Chinese player smile subtly at them. He was none other than Haochen’s guild master, Bedu.

‘Everything is going according to plan...!’

Once the three other people died together with him, they would not know what they had done. They would all disappear leaving only their artifacts behind. Right now, Bedu was grinning widely.

‘There are artifacts all over the place!’

There were also players that were wiped out along the way, so he was sure that there were artifacts there too. All they needed to do was to go back the same path when climbing up and pick up those sweet, sweet artifacts. It was literally the epitome of awesomeness in his books.

Then, at that moment...

“I will punish you, you arrogant bastards!”

...The Ancient Monarch demonstrated another AOE magic spell. The grounds twisted as the roots of the trees elongated and shot out towards them.

At that time, Minhyuk shouted, “You don’t have that many abilities! This is the end?!!”

“Puny bastard!”

The Ancient Monarch gathered all of his strength.

Brrrrrrrr—

It felt like the entire world was vibrating that even the lazy birds from the nearby trees flew away in a squawk. A powerful force penetrated and flooded the players, including Minhyuk.

“What a provocation!”

Then, using ‘Like the Wind’, Minhyuk appeared in front of Ali. He could see Kentaro and Bedu standing next to him. They saw Minhyuk pull out an artifact from his inventory.

“...?”

“...?”

“...?”

Ali, Kentaro and Bedu all looked at him incredulously.

What he took out was none other than the Bowl and Mixer. The Bowl was usually used to store ingredients while the Mixer was used to whip eggs or dough. However, Minhyuk just suddenly started turning the Mixer with an empty Bowl.

‘What the hell? What’s this idiot doing?’

‘Mi... Minhyuk... yo... you’re acting strange...’

‘What the hell is with this person?’

The Ancient Monarch felt that he was too preposterous. He said, “You moronic human!”

Just as the power that the Ancient Monarch released was about to strike down, a white light appeared in the Bowl of the Mixer. The more he turned the Mixer, the brighter the light inside the bowl became. Then, the light burst out.

And...

Shashashashashak—

Gr————

The twisting roots disappeared back into the ground and the raging land sank down again. Even the surrounding trees that started to rage returned back to their original form. All of the abnormalities that were caused by the Ancient Monarch returned back to their original form.

[Cancel.]

[All of the magic and skills will be nullified and void within a five-meter radius from the player.]

Then, Minhyuk quickly stored the Mixer back in his inventory before shouting, “It’s fake! Complete bullshit!!!”

“...!”

“...!”

“ ..!”

“...!”

“...!”

The three people around him were all shocked.

Then, the Ancient Monarch said, “Ridiculous...”

The Ancient Monarch looked as puzzled as the rest of them.

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Everyone in the area stared in horror.

‘All of the abilities were nullified...?’

‘What kind of fraudulent ability is this?’

‘That’s that, but I can’t believe that someone can cast their skills just by turning and spinning a Bowl and Mixer...?’

Just a few minutes ago, the Monarch’s Roar had rendered their skills and magic unavailable for five minutes, but now in front of them, Minhyuk did something more ludicrous. However, it did not end there, the Roves’ ring that was on Minhyuk’s finger shined brightly which created a huge tidal wave.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The tidal wave stretched out and engulfed the Ancient Monarch. This time, the man brought out another item and it was a millstone. He grabbed the handle of the millstone and...

Turn, turn, turn, turn—

“Th...this time it’s a millstone...”

“Ha... hahaha...”

Ali and Kentaro had no choice but to laugh at how ridiculous the situation in front of them was. However, their curiosity still got the better of them, wondering what sort of skill and power this millstone would show them.

Rumble—

With the rumbling sound that came up from above, the three dumbfounded players all looked up in the sky.

‘Dark clouds?’

The phrase? ‘bolt out of a blue’? was perfect for the dark cloud that suddenly appeared in the otherwise clear sky. Just in time, the Ancient Monarch struggled and eventually squeezed out of the huge tidal wave that engulfed him earlier.

Bang!!

A lightning bolt suddenly struck down on the Ancient Monarch’s body.

“Keuaaack!”

The torture did not end there.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Dozens of lightning bolts rained down on the Ancient Monarch. They hit him without fail and placed great pressure on his body. What was more surprising was the fact that the wounds on the Ancient Monarch's body were rapidly healing even after being hit with those insane lightning bolts.

"Such a ridiculous regeneration ability..."

After using the Lightning Hell from the millstone, Minhyuk quickly used his Fluttering Sword.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaaa—

Falling leaves suddenly appeared in the air as dust swirled around Minhyuk's body. Just as the duration of Lightning Hell ended...

"Bastaaaard!"

The Ancient Monarch raised his sword and slashed it down strongly. A fierce and long sword light shot out from his sword. The sword was so huge and long that it was the first time for everyone present to have seen anything like that at all.

Shweeeeeeeeeek!

At the same time, the cast time of the Fluttering Sword ended.

Pew, pew, pew, pew, pew, pew—

Hundreds of sword lights collided with the flying sword. The fluttering leaves scattered and disappeared with the strike from the powerful sword. However, with the continuous attacks from the fallen leaves, the power of the gigantic sword slowly began to wear off before disappearing right under the players' noses.

"Haa, haaa... I think I lost ten years of my life there," Kentaro said, in both fear and disgust.

In all honesty, the rest of them were all useless. Not to mention Ali was a mage player, even Kentaro, who was supposedly stronger in his basic stats and powers, would still die once he attacked the Ancient Monarch. It was only now that Kentaro had realized how weak he was.

'I can't do anything.'

He could not help but shudder when he realized the strength of the man that was currently standing in front of him.

'I also want to be as strong as him...'

Then, he watched as the man dashed towards the Ancient Monarch.

[Sword of Fury]

[There will be an additional 100% for strong lunges and stabs, if a vital strike is successful, the additional attack power will be 140%. Enemies within a two-meter radius will be torn apart by the force of the wind with an additional 60% attack power.]

Minhyuk's sword flashed red as he stabbed at the Ancient Monarch strongly. However, the roots and branches that rose from the ground began to surround the Ancient Monarch, forming an armor around his body at the same time.

Crash!

The moment Minhyuk's sword made contact with his body...

[The effect of Sword of Fury has disappeared.]

...an ability that was quite literally similar to Cancel was suddenly unleashed. His skill became useless the moment his sword collided with the tree armor. Then, additional roots and branches that were created by the Ancient Monarch started to bind Minhyuk's body.

"Keup!"

[You're bound by the Branch Shackles.]

[You will not be able to move until you get out of this restraint.]

Slash!

The Ancient Monarch brought his sword down on Minhyuk's body. Minhyuk's HP began to fall at a rapid pace.

[Your HP has dropped below 60%.]

[Your HP has dropped below 40%.]

[Due to continuous bleeding, your head has temporarily become dizzy.]

The Monarch was suddenly blocked when he was about to strike down on Minhyuk again.

"Oink!"

Beanie gallantly blocked the sword in front of Minhyuk as it faced against the Ancient Monarch's sword.

Clang! Clang, clang, clang!

"Laughable!"

"Oink!"

However, Beanie was not able to hold on and was pushed back in no time at all. Just as the Ancient Monarch was going to strike down again...

Dash—

...Kentaro moved. The sword of the Ancient Monarch that was headed for Minhyuk was intercepted. It pierced Kentaro's abdomen.

"Keup!"

Kentaro threw himself in front of Minhyuk even though he knew that he would be forced to log out. He said, “I have repaid the life that I owed you.”

Kentaro watched as his HP drained rapidly. The Ancient Monarch kicked him in irritation.

“Urk!”

Then, the notifications rang loudly in everyone’s ears.

[The Monarch’s Roar’s penalty has been lifted.]

“Fire!”

Crackle!

Ali cast powerful flames to burn the branches and roots that tied down Minhyuk’s body. There was no significant damage on Minhyuk from the fire since his magical defense was ridiculously high.

Tear, tear—

Minhyuk tore the branches that were weakened from the fire before stepping back. Then, he sent whispers to Ali.

[Minhyuk: Do you have any kind of lethal magic? A magic that can kill that bastard in a single blow. I can hold him down for a second.]

[Ali: There is... But you might be forced to log out too.]

[Minhyuk: Can you use it right now?]

[Ali: Yes. I can use it right away. But, I only have one chance.]

Minhyuk did not reply. He just jumped on the Ancient Monarch. He knew that this bastard had very strong regenerative abilities, so they needed to hit him with one strong hit. Strong enough that he would not be able to regenerate at all. Minhyuk was confident with the power of the Scattering Sword, but he also knew that it would not be able to deal enough damage to finish the Monarch at one go.

Using ‘Like the Wind’, Minhyuk quickly approached the Ancient Monarch. He allowed another attack to land on him to find a gap that he could take advantage of.

Stab!

“Urggh!”

[Your HP has fallen below 20%.]

Then, Minhyuk hugged the Ancient Monarch with all his might.

“This bastard...!”

The Ancient Monarch was stunned and flustered when he was suddenly held in a vice-like grip. However, his power was tremendous so he easily broke his arm free from the hug as he smashed down on Minhyuk.

[Your HP has fallen below 10%.]

However, even when Minhyuk fell to the ground, he did not let him go so easily. He even grabbed his legs to stop him even just for a moment. After preparing his attack, Ali finally murmured something under his breath. He said, "Diss."

It was the skill from the skill book that he had acquired after clearing the Liberation of the Hero's Curse. Diss.

Shweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee—

A large spear made of light rapidly descended from the sky. It was even faster than the speed of light. The large spear instantly pierced the Ancient Monarch.

Stab!

"Acck!"

The Ancient Monarch vomited out a mouthful of blood. It seemed like the spear made of light had dealt great damage on its body. The Ancient Monarch even staggered back from the impact of the spear. However, he slowly grabbed the spear of light.

"Crazy shit...!"

Ali stared in horror. Diss was an attack magic that could concentrate a tremendous amount of magic power. It could even increase the player's magical attack power by 1,200%. However, the Ancient Monarch was still alive and moving. He even grabbed the spear as he tried to pull it out of his body.

At that moment, Minhyuk, whose HP almost fell to the bottom, delivered the final blow.

"Scattering Sword."

It was a tremendously strong single sword strike that had eight times his attack power! The overwhelming power of Minhyuk's sword struck down on the Ancient Monarch.

Stab!

"Keuaaaaaaaack!" The Ancient Monarch shrieked loudly as a mysterious skeletal figure came out of his mouth and fluttered in the air. He was finally liberated from the control of the demon. However, the skeletal figure that floated in the air targeted another player, which was none other than Bedu.

Bedu was flustered.

[You, who awakened my power... Give me more strength... You who awakened my power...!]

Not long after, the skeletal figure scattered and disappeared in the air. However, Bedu's face was already distorted beyond belief. He thought, 'This f*cker! Why is this NPC screwing me up!!'

Ali and Kentaro's eyes narrowed sharply.

'Everything was instigated by this person...'

'This instigator must have collected the sculptures and awakened that guy.'

For some, the reason did not matter, but the two of them had this hunch. Immediately, Kentaro and Ali did not hesitate to attack Bedu. He died easily under the hands of the two, but since Bedu has

long been in a Chaotic State, he dropped his artifacts after his death. In other words, he reaped what he had sown.

Then, the notifications began to pour in.

[The Guardians' Tower shines brightly.]

[All of the scores will now be added up.]

[Korea Number One. 71,316 team points.]

[Passageway 5. 7,231 team points.]

Kentaro knew that it was his complete defeat. The gap between their scores was as much as ten times. Even the individual scores were in the same state.

[Korea Number One. Minhyuk. 51,415 individual points.]

[Korea Number One. Ali. 49,541 individual points.]

[You will receive the Monarch's Treasure Chest after combining the team and individual scores.]

[You have cleared the Ancient Monarch raid with an unreachable score.]

Minhyuk heard the notifications. Meanwhile, Black Mage Ali's face was stiff. It was because he also heard the notification for the Hall of Kings.

'Cleared with an unreachable score!'

This was the first time that two different people entered the Hall of Kings at the same time.

[Your name has entered the Hall of Kings.]

[You can choose to remain anonymous, post your ID or use a different name.]

[You will receive additional rewards for climbing the Hall of Kings.]

[You have acquired the Ancient Monarch's seeds.]

Minhyuk still chose to remain anonymous. Then, the notifications continued to ring.

[The twelfth King in the world has been born.]

[South Korea's King Anonymous' name will be spread all over the world.]

"...!"

Kentaro had also heard the notifications. The notifications for the Hall of Kings would always ring all over the world! And the Anonymous King!

'As expected, he's the guy that participated in the competition not too long ago!'

Kentaro had also watched the video of?Athenae: Korean World War. He finally realized that the player who shone brightly during that competition was standing in front of him.

Then, another set of notifications rang.

[The thirteenth King has been born in the world.]

[South Korea's King Black Mage Ali's name will be spread all over the world.]

“...!”

Kentaro was once again caught by surprise. This was because this was the first time that two players entered the Hall of Kings at the same time.

With this, South Korea now had two kings. In addition, ‘Anonymous’, with his record-breaking, three-consecutive entrance into the Hall of Kings, was the only player with the same score as ‘Kenra’.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk got additional notifications.

[You have completed the Surprise Class Quest: The Ancient Monarch’s Yearning.]

[You have acquired the ingredients for the Ancient Monarch’s Soy Sauce Braised Chicken.]

“Yayy!! Soy sauce braised chicken!!”

When Ali and Kentaro saw him being so over the moon with joy after they heard the Hall of King’s notifications, as well as the Monarch’s Treasure Chest notifications, they thought, ‘Ah~ He must have gotten something nice~’.

Ali scuttled forward to check the Ancient Treasure Chest. When he saw the contents inside, he could not help but shout, “Cr...crazy...!”

It was a Two-thousand-year-old Ginseng that could increase his mana reserves by 1.7x permanently! Then, Ali turned to speak to Minhyuk excitedly, only to watch him happily jump around from getting the ingredients for the soy sauce braised chicken.

“A Two-thousand-year-old Ginseng came out of my treasure chest. Minhyuk.”

“Oh. Congratulations. Wait. Does that mean that I can also get something to eat?! Something delicious!”

“...May...maybe?”

Ali nodded in embarrassment while Minhyuk hurriedly clicked on his own treasure chest.

Brrrrrr, brrrrr, brrrrr—

The Monarch’s Treasure Chest began to vibrate wildly.

‘Something delicious, please come out! Something delicious!’ Minhyuk prayed and wished for it sincerely. After confirming what he had acquired, his expression suddenly turned sullen.

“...I guess I don’t have luck with draws,’ Minhyuk said sulkily.

Seeing how sulky he was, Ali asked, “What did you get? Can you share it with me?”

Minhyuk nodded with a pout. Ali was able to confirm that Minhyuk had obtained a method to produce Demigod artifacts.

(Demigod Artifact Production Method)

Special Abilities: It can guide players on how to produce a Demigod artifact in the form that they want.

Description: Among the Demigod Production Methods, it is very rare for someone to get a production method that can guide them to create an artifact in the form that they want.

Ali was shocked after repeatedly confirming the item that Minhyuk had obtained. He could not understand his reaction at all.

“Th...this is what you pull out when you’re unlucky with draws?!”

Minhyuk continued to pout as he answered, “Have you heard about a wise saying? ‘Life is divided into two parts, before knowing chicken and after knowing chicken.’?Kghk!?Just like that saying, I had hoped to wash the fatigue of today away if I pulled out a chicken but... I can’t believe that I pulled out a parchment that I can’t even eat...!”

“...”

It seemed like in Minhyuk’s eyes, the Demigod Artifact Production Method was worse than a chicken.

Chapter 224: How to Make Demigod Artifacts

Kentaro suddenly approached Minhyuk. He said “I won’t lose next time.”

Minhyuk did not answer him. After all, Kentaro had also saved his life once.

Kentaro’s lips curled up. He felt a strong desire to become stronger! He was very determined to improve himself and become stronger, so he asked Minhyuk, “I have a question.”

After all, while he felt that his pride had been hurt, his desire for strength outweighed his ego.

“How can I be as strong as you?”

Minhyuk just answered it simply. Then, Ali, Kentaro and Minhyuk acquired all of the dropped artifacts.

Before logging out, Ali said, “Minhyuk, I’ll always run to you when you need me.”

“Thank you. Ali!”

It was absolutely unimaginable to get help anytime from the world’s most powerful mage, Ali!

After they had left, the Haochen Guild members were all resurrected by the Absolute Commander’s ability. They could see that not only were the other artifacts missing, even their own artifacts had disappeared. Since Beas Village had opened, the only thing that they had done was the entrance quest for the entire two months of their preparation. What was worse was that even their artifacts were gone. Of course, they still had some backups that were worse than the usual, but it was still a fact that they had suffered a great loss.

“No waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!”

When they finally revived and came back to their senses, they grabbed their heads and wailed loudly. The birds in the surrounding area were startled and flew off the trees.

Meanwhile, after Kentaro ended the game, he directly went to the kitchen. After all, he was told about the way to become strong!

‘That’s right. This way, I can be stronger too!’

Kentaro ate three bowls of rice first before slouching down and rubbing his stomach. After digesting the food to some extent, he immediately went out to his yard.

“Haa! Haa! Haa!”

Then, he started to wield his katanas with all his might. Sweat dripped down continuously from his forehead, but Kentaro did not feel tired at all. Contrary to that, he was even feeling a sense of thrill and excitement.

At night, once the clock ticked to nine o’clock, he had already tucked himself under the covers just like a child who came to a new country.

‘Eat well, exercise hard, and sleep well!’

Minhyuk’s words were a bit vague, but Kentaro was still moved.

‘Aaaaah! This is life’s insight and realization! Eat well, exercise hard and sleep well! Is there a better saying than this?’

Kentaro was excited. He thought that he could finally see why Minhyuk was so strong.

‘When a person eats well, exercises hard and sleeps on time, it means that they grind themselves regularly. Even though he just told me those words simply, I believe that those words can speak to one’s soul!’

That was when Kentaro decided that he could do it too. He could eat well, exercise hard and sleep well! Kentaro quietly pulled the blanket up to his chin as he fell in his dreamland, dreaming sweetly of the future where he was finally stronger. A smile curled up on his lips after realizing that he could finally be stronger.

He did not know it, but Minhyuk only said that he should eat well, exercise hard and sleep well, because he somehow really became stronger by doing that.

Athenae Temple was the largest and greatest place where believers and devotees gathered in the virtual reality game?Athenae. In addition, the Athenae Religion was the most powerful ‘religion’ among all of the gods present in the world view. Most of the Priests and Paladins in the global rankings were members of the Athenae Religion. However, that was just it, they were just literally rankers. In fact, being a member of the Athenae Religion was very difficult. In addition to having a strict discipline, only those with at least 500 points on their holy power stats were allowed to join the congregation. Even so, due to the Athenae Religion, the gaming lives of the players were blooming splendidly.

A woman stared at a distance as she stood by the window in the Athenae Temple. She was quite astounded by the foreigners that visited Athenae Temple every day.

“It... it’s the Saintess Loyna!”

“Wow... So, so beautiful! I have never seen someone as beautiful as her in the world!”

In the virtual reality game?Athenae, there existed an NPC that was described to be the most beautiful woman. That NPC was none other than the figure in front of the window, the Saintess Loyna. Loyna was the Saintess personally sent down by God of Athenae and she was more beautiful than anybody else.

The reason why Saintess Loyna was standing in front of the window was simple.

“A foreigner is going to challenge and move the Saint’s Sword.”

The Saint’s Sword! It was a legend that was passed down along with the Athenae Religion. It was said that whoever moved the Saint’s Sword, that was deeply embedded in the ground, was most likely the one that would become a hero.

However, 2,000 years had passed since the Athenae Religion was founded but the Saint’s Sword was still stuck in that same place. Nobody was able to move it at all.

‘It requires a high level of holy power. In addition, that person needed to be pure without greed for treasure or sexual desire.’

It?had?been 2,000 years. In those 2,000 long years, no one was chosen. Currently, Bavecka’s Child, Julian, said that he was going to challenge the Saint’s Sword, even though he was not a part of the Athenae Religion. He was a foreigner, and was said to have the highest Holy Power among the foreigners, on top of being a well-known and distinguished priest.

“Wow. Bavecka’s Julian!”

“The man who threw away all of his greed even inside the game!”

The players were all in a buzz. People were allowed to try and move the Saint’s Sword regardless if they were a member of the?Athenae?Religion or not.

The foreigners began to gather while Loyna looked with great anticipation from above. She saw Julian grab the golden hilt of the Saint’s Sword. He held it with both hands before pulling it up.

“Keuuuuup!”

“...”

Alas, it did not budge at all. Perhaps feeling the embarrassment from being watched by a lot of people, Julian exerted a lot of strength.

“Keuaaaaaaa!”

Then...

Poooooot~

...no matter how strong he was, Julian still rushed out of the area with his face as red as an apple after accidentally farting.

Loyna turned around and bit her lips tightly. She thought,?‘There are a lot of movements on the demon’s side these days. Something is about to happen. There’s definitely something.’

Steam was rising from the pot of soy sauce braised chicken. This was the Monarch's soy sauce braised chicken that Minhyuk had received after successfully hunting the Ancient Monarch.

He smiled happily when he saw the bowl of rice and soy sauce braised chicken in front of him. Then, he quickly stretched out his chopsticks and picked up a chicken leg first. He happily took a bite out of the steaming chicken leg. The salty flavor of the soy sauce, as well as the tender, soft texture of the chicken meat put a smile on his face.

After eating all of the meat on the chicken leg, he ate a spoonful of rice. Then, he stretched out his chopsticks to pick a piece of the well-diced potato. The light, salty and soft taste of the potato spread in his mouth.

This time, he sprinkled a spoonful of sauce on top of his rice before adding the potatoes and mashing it in the rice. Then, he chomped on a mouthful of rice and potato. Next, he lifted the flat noodles that were usually used in soy sauce braised chicken, before placing it in his mouth and slurping it down.

“Ah. Delicious.”

The flat noodles had absorbed the flavor of the soy sauce more than the chicken, so the taste could already be said to be truly delicious. Minhyuk could also taste the strong flavor of the seasonings in other parts of the dish! There was a saying that when one ate chicken, they should eat it without knowing whether it was a fried chicken or a seasoned chicken.

Just like that, Minhyuk cleaned everything on his plate. Then, the notifications began to ring.

[You have eaten the Ancient Monarch's Soy Sauce Braised Chicken.]

[You have gained 500 points of Holy Power.]

[You have learned 'Food-related Quests', one of the Food God's Divinations.]

“...Huh?”

Minhyuk was somewhat surprised. He already read before that he would gain knowledge about the Food God's Divination once he ate the Ancient Monarch's soy sauce braised chicken. However, when he confirmed the dish before, it did not state clearly what the divination was.

Minhyuk quickly checked the Food-related Quests.

(Food-related Quests)

Food God's Divination

Effects: You will occasionally receive quests related to the food that you eat. This is the Food God's Divination that only a Food God could have.

“Oh...!”

A small smile curled in Minhyuk's mouth. This was because his foodie senses tell him that something delicious would come out from the Food-related Quests. Furthermore, these were quests he could only obtain after eating different kinds of food.

“This is definitely the smell! Hmm~ Smell~!”

Minhyuk smiled with satisfaction before feeling a bit of distress. After hunting the Ancient Monarch, he was able to obtain the ‘Monarch’s seeds’. After he added Ali as a friend, he had asked him about it and he realized that he was the only one who received such a reward. He was guessing that it was because he had a higher individual score than the rest of them, so he had received this.

Minhyuk turned to the seeds and checked the information again.

(Monarch’s Seeds)

Material Grade: ???

Special Abilities: ???

Description: Only the pope or the candidate for papacy can awaken its power.

The question marks remained the same even after he checked it again. Even the description was a bit cryptic.

‘Ah... I think it would be better if I grew these seeds.’

That was right. Minhyuk was only interested in delicious things. And for that reason, Minhyuk sent another whisper to Abel.

[Minhyuk: A~ beeeeeel~]

[Abel: Min~hyuuuuuuk~]

[Minhyuk: I have a question.]

[Abel: Yep! Ask me anything.]

[Minhyuk: Who is the pope? Or maybe the candidate for papacy?]

[Abel: The current pope is Pope Carunu, he is the 21st pope and is well-known to be the most powerful pope alive. And there is only one candidate for the papacy. It’s the one they call Saintess Loyna. Loyna is famous for being the woman that Athenae’s absolute god has personally sent down. By the way, don’t tell me that you don’t know about Loyna?]

[Minhyuk: Yep.]

[Abel: You don’t know about the most beautiful woman alive in Athenae...]

[Minhyuk: Will it be hard to meet her?]

[Abel: It will be possible to see her face from afar if you stayed in Athenae Temple for about ten days. But it’s almost impossible to get a direct audience with her unless you’re a high-ranking priest.]

[Minhyuk: Ah. I see...]

Minhyuk thought that it was a pity. He thanked Abel, but his thoughts still continued to churn in his head.

‘Do I really need to give up?!’

The Monarch’s Seeds were definitely something extraordinary.

‘I’m sure something delicious will grow out of this!’

Loyna looked at Corr, commander of the Paladins, then watched the Athenae’s crystal ball. The Athenae’s crystal ball could measure the amount of demonic energy in the surroundings. However, her face right now was distorted.

‘The crystal ball is indicating that the amount of demonic energy is more than the usual...’

It was clear that Demon Verus and his devil worshippers were all moving. Then, Corr said, “A foreigner has been asking me to meet you for about 15 days now.”

“...Is that so?”

“Yes.”

“But why are you reporting this to me?” Loyna asked, smiling coldly.

The number of foreigners who wanted to meet her up close and personal were overflowing. Some people even waited for a month, not just 15 days. However, she was the Saintess and the only candidate for the papacy. Was she supposed to care about one foreigner just like that? She was also slightly put off about the fact that the Corr had reported something this trivial to her.

“He’s a completely unique foreigner, already adored and loved by all of the priests of the Athenae Religion.”

“...What do you mean?” Loyna asked in confusion.

‘Adored and loved by all of the priests of the Athenae Religion? That can’t be true. Those people all had their nose up in the sky. They believed that Athenae Religion is the superior ‘religion’. They’re even more snobbish than most of the nobles in the continent.’

“I also adore him, that’s why I’m reporting this to you. It seems that he’s going to challenge the Saint’s Sword today.”

Loyna frowned at his words. She was a bit curious about this person who was loved and adored by all of the priests.

She opened the door and went out. The sight in front of her had left her speechless. The priests and foreigners were all gathered around the area. A man stood at the center of all these people. He grasped the hilt of the sword with his hands. No. To be more exact, he held the hilt of the sword and lightly lifted it. The sword was actually easily pulled out.

“Huh? It came out?”

The moment the sword was pulled out, the Saint’s Sword shined brightly. Its light covered the entirety of the Athenae Temple. Loyna’s body trembled.

‘He, he, he’s the man of the legends...!’

She was so excited that she shouted unknowingly, “Why did you pull it out!!!”

The man was caught in surprise. He said, “Ah! That’s right! It moved at my touch. Wait! Sorry!”

Then, he put the sword back in.

“N...no!! Why did you put it back inside?!!”

“Ah. All right!”

Then, the man pulled it out again.

“Keok!”

An indescribable sound came out of Loyna’s mouth.

‘What kind of joke is this? Why can he easily pull the Saint’s Sword out?! He even looked like he was just pulling up some radish from the ground?!’

Chapter 225: The Birth of Minhyuk Religion

Five days in reality, or fifteen days in Athenae.

Director Kim Daesik was thrilled beyond words when he saw Team Leader Park entering the door with sunglasses on his face while saying, ‘Aloha~’.

“Team Leader Park!” Director Kim greeted Team Leader Park as he strode forward and hugged him tightly, saying, “I missed you so much!”

Team Leader Park looked at Director Kim Daesik in confusion after he hugged him as though he had finally met his long-lost relative. He turned to look at Lee Minhwa. He did not voice it out and just mouthed at her, ‘What’s with him?’

‘A lot of things happened,’ Lee Minhwa mouthed back, smiling wryly at him.

Director Kim Daesik let go of Team Leader Park and said, “I finally realized how much work the Special Players Management Team is doing and how sincere you all are!! You’ve worked hard!! You guys are the pride and joy of Joy Co. Ltd!!!”

As soon as he finished speaking, he whisked himself away and disappeared from the room. When he met President Kang Taehoon, Director Kim said, “The Special Players Management Team is a key part of our Joy Co. Ltd. Considering the heavy workload and mental toll, I think they should be given frequent bonuses and vacations.”

“I see. Ah. How was it? I’m thinking of using you as a substitute when the people from the Special Players Management Team finally get some extra vacation time.”

“In that case, I think it’s better to take out the vacation and just give them more bonuses!”

That was the kind of talk that went on between them.

Meanwhile, Team Leader Park’s face turned black after hearing the briefing. He asked, “What is Player Minhyuk’s current status?”

“He received the Monarch’s Seeds and is now currently heading to Athenae Temple housing the Athenae Religion.”

Team Leader Park’s expression crumpled. His expression was that of hearing bad news as soon as he came back to work.

“Monarch’s Seeds? Athenae Religion...?” Team Leader Park asked in disbelief.

Lee Minhwa bitterly explained the process of how Minhyuk had acquired the Monarch’s Seeds.

“The bastards from Haochen Guild did such a thing? It’s a good thing that Beas Village did not disappear... but I can’t believe that the Monarch’s Seeds that’s supposed to appear three months later are now in the hands of Player Minhyuk...”

Lee Minhwa nodded and said, “That’s a huge amount of power.”

“That’s right. Based on Player Minhyuk’s nature, he will do anything to awaken the Monarch’s Seeds because he believes that something delicious will come out of it.”

“Yes. That’s why he’s heading towards Athenae Religion’s temple now.”

“It’s fortunate that he will not be able to meet Loyna, even if he went to the temple.”

“Yes.”

Compared to Sword Emperor Ellie, it was much harder to gain Loyna’s favor. Of course, the quest for the Monarch’s Seeds would only proceed if Minhyuk met with the pope or Loyna. However, it was still too early for him. The Athenae Religion was the greatest religion existing in?Athenae’s? worldview and it was filled with proud and arrogant people. Team Leader Park believed that Minhyuk would not be able to meet Loyna in such a place.

“And no matter how high Player Minhyuk’s Holy Power is, he will still not be able to pull out the Saint’s Sword yet,” Team Leader Park said, feeling a bit relieved.

The Saint’s Sword would only be pulled out if Minhyuk had at least 4,000 Holy Power. In total, Minhyuk’s Holy Power, as well as the various artifacts that he had that could increase the Holy Power by X times, still fell short of that threshold. He felt relieved at such a thought. However, he would soon realize that there was nothing to be relieved at.

Minhyuk saw a large temple when he arrived at the Athenae Religion’s church. The temple was as splendid and magnificent as those in Greece.

Minhyuk knew that Athenae Temples existed in each and every server of the world. Among these NPC priests, there were special existences that could warp into Athenae Temples from all over the world. He had heard that those people were the pope and Loyna. It was said that Loyna and the pope could move to their rooms in the Athenae Temple in each country’s server. In other words, they were the only NPCs that existed uniquely throughout the servers in the world. It was also the same for the Saint’s Sword. It existed on every server, but there was only one item in the entire world. The moment someone drew it out, it would be removed from the rest of the servers.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk had finally entered the temple at a price of 10 million gold. Although he was allowed entry in the Athenae Temple, he could only view everything in his sight. He was not allowed to touch anything. This was how the system had set everything inside.

In addition, when someone made a fuss inside, they would immediately receive a curse that would turn them into a 'Chaotic' player. The admission fee was also extremely expensive, so the only ones that could enter would either be the extremely rich, or those who wanted to challenge the Saint's Sword.

Minhyuk glanced at his admission guide, Priest Kenneth, the moment he entered the temple. Admission guides were priests who would stay with the player together from the moment they entered until they exited the temple. His guide, Kenneth, was a priest with neat blonde hair and an overall aesthetically pleasing appearance.

Minhyuk called out carefully, "Kenneth."

"Yes."

"By any chance, may I have an audience with Miss Loy..."

"No."

"..."

"..."

It seemed like a lot of people had asked this question to the point that Kenneth answered him a second after... no... before he was even done talking.

"Is there a way..."

"There's none."

"Just once..."

"Do you want to leave immediately?"

Kenneth felt bad for refusing Minhyuk from the very beginning. Even though Kenneth knew that Minhyuk was very polite and kind, he still could not allow the things that really could not be done.

Minhyuk bowed in silence as he looked around. He thought, 'There's got to be a way.'

There was always this thing called 'flexibility and adaptability' wherever people lived and interacted. Of course, Minhyuk had also searched the official website for answers. And the people's reactions were simple.

[Loyna's Great: Let me explain how you can meet Loyna.

Buy a Loyna figurine. Buy a Loyna pillow. Buy Loyna's video. Become a priest and get banned from speaking and eating meat for 10 years. You also need to pray to the God of Athenae for 12 hours each day.] The comments below the article were mildly acceptable. The joking tone of the post was clear, but when he looked through it, he realized that the quest that would connect to Loyna was still not confirmed. Still, Minhyuk believed that there was always a way.

Meanwhile, he continued to walk through the crowd. He could see a huge greatsword stuck in the ground. The hilt of the sword was made out of gold and the image of a bull was imprinted on the body of the sword that represented the Athenae Religion.

‘That bull looks delicious...’Minhyuk thought as he watched the players step forward and challenge the swords. However, all of the players failed miserably. Then...

“It’s the eighth in the local Paladin Rankings, Randos!”

“Randos!! He’s the one with the tremendous Holy Power at 400, right?”

The players began to whisper together in admiration.

Then, Randos, a man in flashing silver armor and bulging muscles, walked forward. He silently approached the sword and grabbed its hilt before pulling strongly.

“Heeeeeeeup!” Randos groaned. Unfortunately, as time went by, his face slowly turned redder and redder while the sound that he let out became weirder.

“Keuaaaaaaaaaa!”

The Saint’s Sword did not budge at all.

“Will that sword be pulled out at all?”

“Isn’t it practically impossible at this point?”

“According to the official website, if you pull out the Saint’s Sword, you will be able to receive a great quest from the Athenae Religion. Right?”

“I heard the rewards are great.”

“I don’t think the contents have been posted though. I wonder how much Holy Power is needed to pull it out?”

The players’ discussions rang loudly in the area. Minhyuk looked at them and decided to try it once. So, he turned to Kenneth and said, “Will I be able to meet Miss Loyna if I pull out the Saint’s Sword?”

“You’ll be able to meet with her,” Kenneth said, a subtle smile flashing on his face before he shook his head.

Hence, Minhyuk challenged the sword. However, just like Randos, he also failed miserably. Minhyuk’s Holy Power stat was at 1,000, and it was actually more than 2,000 in actuality. This was thanks to the effect of Pandora’s Helmet. Even so, it was still useless.

Minhyuk sighed. Instead of wallowing in self pity, Minhyuk decided to look around with Kenneth first. In the meantime...

“It’s lunch time.”

Kenneth smiled at Minhyuk and said, “Brother, you do know that it’s not possible to eat meat here. Right?”

“Ah. Yes. I know.”

“If we go to the restaurant, you will be able to eat a vegetarian meal. Foreigners and priests all go there to eat. Let’s go there.”

It was a strict and rigid discipline!

No one would even dare to eat meat in Athenae Temple. But when Minhyuk followed him to the restaurant and saw the menu, his eyes bulged in shock.

‘What is this!!’

Minhyuk was very surprised. A bowl of raw garlic salad cost 10,000 gold, while lettuce salad was about 20,000 gold. Even the unseasoned spinach was about 20,000 gold. This price range was definitely shocking. Minhyuk ended up not buying anything. He sat in front of Kenenth and thought, ‘I’m hungry...!’

Minhyuk felt sad as he muttered to himself, “There are many animals running around in nature, how can I eat grass like this? Brother.”

Then, Minhyuk saw the food that Kenneth ate. It was a bowl of salad with no sauce at all. He was reminded of himself eating those cherry tomatoes.

Minhyuk turned to look around. He could see that most of the players had the same expression as him while the admission guides continued to eat comfortably, as if the food that they ate were naturally delicious. However, Minhyuk knew.

‘I know that they want to eat something delicious!!!’

He knew that this place would not accept any artificial seasoning as their seasoning. The only thing that they could eat were pure ingredients that were harvested from the ground. In other words, MSG was not allowed. As he watched them like that, Minhyuk suddenly came up with a brilliant idea.

‘Pe...perhaps...!’

First, he needed to get close to the people in here for him to be able to meet the king of this place. Loyna was the king, and the priests were her subjects. Minhyuk thought that his idea was brilliantly clever.

Not long after, he said, “Priest.”

“Yes?”

“Is that delicious?”

“No.”

Kenneth continued to speak with great conviction, “It’s like I’m chewing paper.”

“Ahhhhh. My goodness!”

Minhyuk felt pity towards him. He could sympathize with him more than anybody else.

“But, it can’t be helped.”

You sound just like a monk, Kenneth!

Then, Minhyuk went closer as he whispered in his ears, "How would you like it if I treated you to a more delicious meal, using those vegetables?"

"...?"

Kenneth's response was unenthusiastic. Then, he asked Minhyuk.

"What are you going to make?"

Everyone was interested in new food so Minhyuk was confident that he would get his attention. When he heard his words, Minhyuk grinned widely at him and said, "Tofu steak."

The priests of the Athenae Religion all lived nearby in a 'priest shelter'. Kenneth was still in a daze when he went back to the shelter.

His fellow priest, Raven, asked, "Kenneth. Why have you been in a daze since a while ago?"

"...N...nothing."

"Really? That's weird."

Kenneth's colleagues looked at him in confusion. Kenneth just stood there in a daze, and he moved robotically as if he was possessed by something.

"What's wrong with Kenneth today?"

"I don't know. I heard that a foreigner made him tofu steak in the restaurant a while ago. He has been like that ever since he ate it."

Kenneth was still in a daze even when he was already lying in his bed. He could not help but imagine those well-done tofu steaks. He remembered cutting the steak into pieces himself. With the fork in his left hand pressing on to the tofu steak, his right hand sliced a piece of tofu steak that he brought towards his mouth. The texture of the tofu steak in his mouth was spectacular.

Kenneth's mouth moved by itself. He looked like he was chewing on it in his sleep. He mumbled, "That soft and warm piece...?Chew, chew, chew... That light yet savory flavor..."

Kenneth had never eaten meat ever since he was born. Even though he had never eaten meat, he believed that real meat would taste and feel the same way with the 'meat' that he ate today. He was covered in cold sweat and his arms were shaking during the entirety of the night. In short, he was experiencing symptoms of tofu steak withdrawal!! In the end, Kenneth could not sleep at all so he stood up.

'I want to eat it again... Tofu steak...'

Then, he opened his eyes.

'Bro...Brother Minhyuk!'

That was the beginning. That was the moment when the Athenae Religion's priests turned around and followed Minhyuk's Religion.

Chapter 226: The Birth of Minhyuk Religion

Kenneth stood up with dark circles under his eyes as he prayed eagerly.

‘I hope Brother Minhyuk did not go back yet!’

Kenneth had prayed tens of thousands of times but he had never been so desperate before. Once he met Minhyuk...

“Athellujah!”

“...Yes?”

Athellujah was a word that those who serve Athenae used to praise him. In reality, one could say that it was the same style as the word?hallelujah.

“Brother Minhyuk,” Kenneth said, squeezing Minhyuk’s hands as he looked at him with sparkling eyes.

“What’s wrong?”

“That... the one you made for me yesterday... Do you still have that tofu steak?”

“Ah. Yes.”

“I want to eat it one more time, what should I do? Ah! I’ll pay you as much as you want!”

Kenneth’s eyes sparkled brightly. He was so eager that he looked like he was a drug addict.

Then, Minhyuk said, “Aaaaah~ Wait~ But I’m a bit busy...”

Minhyuk slowly dragged the words out of his mouth, although he was smiling deep inside.

‘Everything is going according to plan!’

Minhyuk could not help but jump up in happiness. However, the more he jumped, the more restless Kenneth became. Kenneth continued to fidget as he asked, “Y...you’re busy?”

“Yes. I have to listen to the harp played by the priests, lie down and eat potato chips... hmmm...”

“...C...can you not do that?”

“I’m sorry.”

“How about a million gold?”

“I have a lot of money though?”

Kenneth became even more restless when he heard Minhyuk’s words.

‘Aaaaaah! My goodness! I can’t even eat it, even if he’s right in front of me!!! How can this be?’

Kenneth agonized over the things that he could offer. Then, he opened his trembling lips and said, "Ble...blessings... Do you want to be blessed?"

"What?"

"The Priest's Blessings!"

Back then, when he was in Valkyrie Kingdom, Priest Eidni gave Minhyuk a Priest's Blessings due to a bet. He was able to receive as much as an increase of 100 in Holy Power thanks to that. Usually, to receive the Priest's Blessings, a player must complete an 'A' ranked quest. But Minhyuk was now being offered such a reward just for a single dish.

"I'm a bit busy but... Okay!"

At the restaurant.

Minhyuk was currently cooking. But this time, it was not tofu steak. Meat was a truly delicious ingredient, but vegetables could taste just as good as meat. Furthermore, Minhyuk's superb cooking skills, as well as his high DEX, could guarantee the deliciousness of the food.

"What's this smell?"

"Oh, it's the smell of cheonggukjang..."

The players mumbled and discussed among themselves as Kenneth looked at the dishes set in front of him in awe.

"Today's dishes are cheonggukjang and bean sprouts bibimbap."

"There should be no artificial seasoning, brother."

"Don't worry. It doesn't contain any artificial seasoning."

Everything was made by Minhyuk himself and he did not use any artificial seasonings at all. Kenneth thought that the smell was quite nasty. Then, a bowl of piping bean sprout bibimbap as well as cheonggukjang was placed in front of him.

'Why does this dish smell so bad?'

Kenneth thought that he would rather eat tofu steak than this. Then, Minhyuk sat in front of him with the same cheonggukjang and bean sprout bibimbap before saying, "Follow me."

"Yes."

Minhyuk stretched his spoon towards the earthen pot filled with cheonggukjang. Minhyuk personally liked having plenty of tofu in his cheonggukjang so he placed quite a lot inside the dish. It was even tofu that was made by grinding soybeans in the Lightning Millstone. His spoon clattered loudly as he cut the tofu and cheonggukjang out of the pot. The pristine white tofu, together with some beans from the cheonggukjang and the savory soup, all gathered in his spoon. Then, he placed it on top of the piping white rice before mixing the tofu and cheonggukjang together.

Kenneth imitated his movements awkwardly. Then, Minhyuk took a spoonful and placed it in his mouth with Kenneth following closely. Kenneth, who was initially skeptical about the taste of this nasty smelling dish, ate a spoonful. As soon as the spoonful entered his mouth, he could hear a heavenly harmony playing in his head.

A~thellujah, A~thellujah, A~thellujah~

“D...delicious. How can something with this terrible smell taste like this... the...the rice. I want to keep eating rice.”

This time, they scooped a spoonful of soup before taking a sip. The flavor was plain, yet delicious. It was exceptionally tasty.

Then, Minhyuk sprinkled some sesame oil on top of his bean sprout bibimbap, before he began to mix it thoroughly. He was already mixing it, and was still drooling unconsciously. Kenneth made sure to follow what Minhyuk did.

The savory scent of the sesame oil and the red chili paste was making both their mouths water. Minhyuk also did not forget to add three spoonfuls of cheonggukjang on his bean sprout bibimbap.

“It tastes better this way.”

“Oh. I see.”

Kenneth copied what Minhyuk did to his bowl. Then, he placed a spoonful of the bibimbap in his mouth.

The moment he felt the texture of the bean sprout bibimbap in his mouth, he could tell it was superb! The various fresh greens and vegetables, together with the spicy red chili paste, combined to create a fantastic taste. There was also a savory aftertaste after every bite which rounded up the flavors of the dish.

‘The cheonggukjang that we added earlier perfectly complements the dish!’

Kenneth ate his bibimbap while eating some tofu and cheonggukjang from time to time. Just like that, he had once again finished another delicious dish.

“It’s really delicious, Brother.”

“Haha. It’s just something simple.”

Then, the two of them stood up and moved to the place where Minhyuk would receive his blessings. Right in front of them was the faceless statue of God Athenae. Kenneth gently placed his hand on Minhyuk’s head as he gave him his blessings.

[You have received Kenneth’s blessings.]

[You have gained 50 Holy Power.]

[You have gained 10 REP.]

Although the blessing was not as good as Priest Eidni’s, Minhyuk was still able to receive 50 Holy Power points. In the first place, a blessing like this could only be given by high-ranking priests and most of the priests in the Athenae Religion were at least as powerful as Kenneth.

While Minhyuk and Kenneth continued to chat after the blessings. Then, Minhyuk said, “By the way, Mister Priest.”

“Yes, Brother?”

Minhyuk had been constantly informed about the continual increment of Kenneth’s favor. Due to that, his mouth had been filled with smiles.

“Priests share and give good things when they encounter them? Right?”

“That’s right. If there’s anything good, then we’ll share it.”

“I see. Fufufufu. Priest, are you going to eat this delicious food alone?”

Indeed, Minhyuk was truly crafty. If he had one customer, then he would definitely have thought of a way to entice two more, three more, four more, or even five more customers. He intended to recruit this Athenae priest under his ‘cause’.

At first, Kenneth did not want to do that at all. If he did that, then he believed that it would be harder to eat Minhyuk’s delicious food. However, Minhyuk’s next words shook his resolve.

“I want to share it with them. That’s why I want Mister Priest to tell the other priests. If you do that, I will give you tofu steak.”

‘If you hesitate, I’ll just throw a carrot after the whip!’?This was the sales method that Minhyuk’s dad had taught him before.

“Yeeeeeees!” Kenneth answered loudly as he nodded furiously.

The next day.

Priests with dark circles and sunken eyes appeared one by one, while Minhyuk stayed in the restaurant as he cooked for them.

[You have received Carndi’s blessings.]

[You have gained 60 Holy Power.]

[You have gained 10 REP.]

[You have received Varc’s blessings.]

[You have gained 70 Holy Power.]

[You have gained 10 REP.]

[You have received Ornic’s blessings.]

[You have gained 50 Holy Power.]

[You have gained 10 REP.]

The priests would gather every night until dawn to pray to God Athenae. The contents of their prayers were...

“Athellujah! Please let Minhyuk cook something delicious tomorrow!”

“Athellujah! Please let Minhyuk stay here a little longer!”

“Minhyuk-Ilujah! Please let me continue to eat his delicious dishes!”

“Uwooooooooooh!?Minhyuk-Ilujaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

They even raised their hands high up in the sky as they shouted loudly! Athellujah had even started to change to Minhyuk-Ilujah!

Team Leader Park and Lee Minhwa were both speechless.

“Cr...crazy...!”

“N...no. How can they do that?”

The two of them were both shocked.

[Minhyuk-Ilujah!]

The Athenae priests looked like hardcore fanatics with what they were doing. When Team Leader Park saw this scene, all he could do was hold his forehead helplessly. Then, he asked, “How high is Player Minhyuk’s Holy Power now?”

“...It’s at 3,011.”

“I’m going nuts.”

Some people would abstain from eating meat or talking, they would even pray all night just to raise their Holy Power by one, but Player Minhyuk raised his Holy Power to 3,011 just like that.

There’s even the double effect from Pandora’s Helmet, right?

This meant that his Holy Power could now exert a little over 6,000 in practice. The only good thing was that the effect would not be added, even if his attack power against the undead was based on his Holy Power. That was because he already had a 100% additional attack power against them.

“Team Leader, if he pulled out the sword...”

“Yeah.”

Both Team Leader Park and Lee Minhwa nodded solemnly.

“The quest will proceed.”

Lee Minhwa shook her head while Team Leader Park rubbed his face. Both of them were worried. The biggest problem in front of them was the quest. This was because that quest was the core of the episode quest that was supposed to be released in the future.

Minhyuk was blessed by the priests and the Holy Knights of Athenae Religion. The Holy Power that he had received from the two groups was at least 300. Minhyuk knew that everything was now ready.

If I pull out the Saint’s Sword, I can meet Saintess Loyna.

“Brother, I believe that you can do it.”

There were several priests surrounding Minhyuk. He looked calmly at them as he asked them a question.

“Everyone...”

“Yes, Brother!”

“Yes, Brother!”

“Yes, Brother!”

“Do you believe in me?”

“We believe in you!”

The priests nodded fiercely. Then, Minhyuk started to move towards the Saint’s Sword. As soon as he moved, the players began to whisper and create a buzz.

“The guy with that tattered helmet is trying to pull out the Saint’s Sword?”

“I heard that there are more than a thousand challenges each day, what’s the big deal with that?”

The players acted the same as usual. In fact, they were all new faces. After all, it was rare for players to stay in the temple for a long time like what Minhyuk did. Who would even stay for a week in the temple just to see the museum? This was the reason why they did not know about what happened with Minhyuk.

“Gasp...! Did you see the priests giving him water?”

“Crazy...! The priests of Athenae are all at Level 450. They also ignore most players who tries to talk to them every day. Yet, you’re telling me that they’re offering water to that guy?”

“Who the hell is that player?”

The players began to make a fuss as Priest Kenneth handed Minhyuk a cold glass of water. Kenneth said, “Haha. Our leader... No, Brother. Please drink a glass of cold water.”

“Ah. Thank you. Kenneth.”

Minhyuk smiled brightly as he slowly stood in front of the Saint’s Sword. Then, he slowly grasped the hilt.

“But it’s still not moving~”

“Yeah. No way~ If it moves then I’ll give you my hands.”

“It did not even move when the Bavecka’s Child, Julian, challenged it before so it doesn’t make sense. I bet that guy can’t do it.”

“What if he pulled it out?”

“If he can do it, then I’ll shave my head and become a priest here.”

“Oh~ You~ Didn’t you just get out of the army not too long ago? What if you lose your hair again?”

“Only make logical comments.”

All the players were saying that it was impossible and ridiculous. But then, one player said, “But why are we talking about the sword moving, and not the sword being pulled out?”

“The Saint’s Sword is a symbolic treasure of the Athenae Religion. If you pull it out then it will be yours, so how can the developers give it to us easily? It’s basically ridiculous if someone is able to move it. Athenae has made it impossible to pull that one out. The Saint’s Sword is literally a sword that can’t be pulled out.”

It was a fact that Athenae had declared that it would be possible to move the sword. However, they believed that it was not yet possible for the players to pull it out. Minhyuk was aware of this fact too.

As soon as his hands held the hilt of the sword, the notifications rang in his head.

[You have challenged the Saint’s Sword.]

[The Saint’s Sword. This is a sword given by God Athenae and is considered to be the holiest sword in the world. This is a holy sword that has killed the demons in the past and has now become the sacred treasure of Athenae Religion.]

Minhyuk also exerted some strength to try and move the sword. To his surprise, all he did was exert a bit of strength, and the sword got pulled out.

“Eh?”

Then, a bright light flashed from the Saint’s Sword as it began to envelop the entire Athenae Temple. The sword radiated a light that shone brighter than any other light in existence. Then, a world message rang loudly in the entire continent.

[The player who pulled out the Saint’s Sword has been born.]

[You have gained 500 REP.]

[You have gained 1,000 Holy Power.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You are now the owner of Athenae Religion’s treasured Saint’s Sword.]

[The Saint's Sword is now attributed to you.]

At that moment, an unidentified voice suddenly shouted at Minhyuk.

“Why did you pull it out!!!”

Minhyuk turned his head and saw a woman dressed in a white, pristine priest robe by the railings of a tall building. Minhyuk was flustered. He was told that he could move the Saint's Sword, but he was not told that he could pull it out. So, he said, “Ah! That's right! It moved at my touch. Wait! Sorry!”

Then, he rammed the sword back in.

“Cr...crazy...!”

“OMG?”

“N...no. Why did you put it back inside!!”

“Ah. All right!”

Minhyuk thought that she was weird but nevertheless he still pulled it out again.

.

“Keok!”

“...”

“...”

“...”

All of the players in the area were left speechless.

Meanwhile, Kenneth, who was standing behind him, was thinking about something else. He thought, ‘As expected of the leader of our Minhyuk Religion. Minhyuk-llujah!’

Chapter 227: The Birth of Minhyuk Religion

The Papal Knight Voloch hurriedly rushed towards the prayer room where Pope Carunu was currently at. He knelt down on one knee and waited for the Pope. After waiting for quite a long time, Voloch finally saw the Pope come out of the room.

Pope Carunu was wearing a pristine and white priest robe with a crown made out of the branches of the Holy Tree on top of his head. He was known to be the greatest, and the strongest Pope in history.

“Voloch, what's going on?”

“Your Holiness, Carunu. The Saint's Sword has been pulled out today.”

“...The Saint's Sword?”

Pope Carunu's eyes widened in surprise as Voloch bowed his head to answer his question. Voloch said, "Yes. It's also pulled out by a foreigner."

"Hoo... How can that be..."

Pope Carunu rubbed his beard in surprise as he nodded and said, "He's probably coming to see me soon."

"That's right."

Voloch nodded in confirmation to the Pope's words. Everyone knew that the person that moved the Saint's Sword must come and see him, so they expected Saintess Loyna to send the foreigner to Pope Carunu.

"I see. This is God's will too."

Voloch shook his head as he stood up from his position to go outside. After Voloch left, Pope Carunu went back inside the prayer room.

Only Pope Carunu was allowed entry inside the prayer room. He stood inside as he stared at the large faceless statue of God Athenae and muttered, "This is God's will... But what are you thinking, Athenae?"

Pope Carunu glared sharply at the statue. It was an unbelievable attitude for a pope who was supposedly serving God. Not long after, he sat on a chair in front of the statue and got lost in thought.

'Everything is going wrong.'

The man who was sitting in front of Athenae was not Pope Carunu, but Demon Verus. He had entered the body of the pope just in the nick of time.

'Originally, the Demon Worshipper Carn should be the one who moved the sword...'

.

Demon Worshipper Carn was the fifth most powerful among all of the demon worshippers. He was also the fourth among the Pinnacle Strong Men of the past. He was tasked to move the sword under Verus' orders. Today was the day when Carn was expected to move the sword so Carn should naturally be in this place. He was also tasked to bring Loyna the 'wine and rice cake' that would bring the entire Athenae Religion down to hell.

On special occasions, the people who served under the Athenae Religion would drink and eat the wine and rice cake that was made by the Papacy. Those items had been corrupted by Verus beforehand. As soon as they ate that rice cake, Saintess Loyna would become a demonic human, and all of the priests of Athenae Religion would lose their Holy Power, as if they were being devoured by a plague.

Carunu thought, 'Let's see...'

Was it a foreigner? Carunu was sure that the foreigner would come and see him personally. Anyway, he could just give the foreigner a 'mission' to deliver the wine and rice cake to Loyna. This should have been Carn's job, but Carunu just thought of giving it to the foreigner instead.

‘And if I reward him generously...’

Everything would work out perfectly. Pope Carunu, to be exact, Demon Verus, stared at the rice cake in front of him.

It was a rice cake set consisting of ‘honey rice cake, injeolmi, siru rice cake, white steamed rice cake, and mochi’

When the Saint’s Sword was pulled out, Paladin Commander Corr was explaining things to Loyna inside.

“That’s what happened... But is that even possible?”

Loyna still could not believe it. They were priests that had served God Athenae their entire lives, but somehow, these priests had willingly given their trust, love and reverence to Minhyuk. They even gave their blessings to him. Corr nodded solemnly.

“Saintess. We are prohibited from eating meat all our lives. It was not different from the vegetables that we usually ate, but the taste was truly too delicious. I also tried that tofu steak and the flavor...”

Corr unknowingly gulped his saliva. Just imagining the dish could make his mouth water. In fact, Minhyuk’s existence was something that was truly special to these people who had led a vegetarian lifestyle from the moment that they entered the church. The taste and flavor of the dish was surprising and strangely enough it really tasted like ‘meat’.

“Co...Corr... even you...”

“...It was really delicious.”

“Hoo... I understand. Let’s listen to what he has to say for now.”

“Yes. I understand!”

Corr stepped forward to lead the way.

However, Loyna still did not like this foreigner who Corr talked about. She could not help herself. After all, she believed that his method was expedient. It was not like any outstanding chef would go and attract priests just so they could move, no, pull out the Saint’s Sword. This was the reason why Loyna still denied the fact that he was the ‘legendary’ figure. Even so, it was only polite for her to meet with the man who pulled out the Saint’s Sword.

Not long after, the foreigner came inside.

“Hello!”

“...”

The foreigner that came in was lively and polite. Loyna just smiled at him as she continued to stare.

‘Men...’

All of the men around her fell in love with her external appearance. They used to make a fuss just so they could hear her voice or brush her hands just once. However, what did they want to do? Loyna was the child of Athenae. He was the only man that she would love. She was the type of woman who would love no other man and would maintain her premarital purity for him and him alone.

“They said that you wanted to meet me?”

“Yes. That’s right.”

“Your reason?”

“I received a thing called ‘Monarch’s Seeds’. The seeds are sealed, but they could only be awakened by either Miss Loyna or the Pope.”

“Is that so?” Loyna said, nodding. Then, she continued, “You do know that you need to pay the price for me to awaken that, right?”

“Of course!”

“Then, let me taste your dishes too.”

It was not that Loyna wanted to eat it but she was just curious. Then she thought, ‘I won’t fall for something like a simple dish. But, I need to identify and check the identity of the dish that has captivated the priests.’

Loyna’s eyes narrowed sharply.

Minhyuk watched as Loyna ate the bean sprout bibimbap in front of him.

She had lost her earlier chic and arrogant aura, and was now hurriedly eating the bibimbap in front of her. Anyone near them could hear the loud clattering of the spoon in the stainless steel bowl.

After Minhyuk stared at her, he decided to check the Saint’s Sword which he was not able to when the commander of the Paladins dragged him away earlier.

(Saint’s Sword)

Rank: Legendary

Restrictions: Minhyuk’s Attributed Artifact

Durability:?

Attack: 931

Special Abilities:

?STR +10%, AGI +15%

?CHA +100

?Your chances of ignoring the defenses of beings with demonic energy will increase to 60%.

?You will receive a higher treatment than most priests of the Athenae Religion anywhere in the world.

?Passive Skill: Advanced Sword Mastery

?Active Skill: Saint's Protection

Description: This was the Saint's Sword that God Athenae had stabbed into the ground. Legend has it that whoever pulls this sword out will be the hero and the Athenae Religion's salvation.

(Saint's Protection)

Artifact Skill

Level: None

Mana Required: 1,000

Cooldown: 168 hours

Effects:

?The user's physical attack and defense as well as magical attack and defense will increase by 30% of Holy Power for 15 minutes.

?The user's party members and guild members' physical attack and defense as well as magical attack and defense will increase by 20% of Holy Power for 15 minutes.

"..."

Minhyuk was left speechless. The skill 'Saint's Protection', as well as the 60% probability of ignoring the defenses of anyone with demonic energy, was simply too broken.

The beings with demonic energy referred to the demonic race, demonic humans or demonic monsters. Although the Demon World was not yet officially released, Minhyuk believed that this was an extremely amazing power to have.

What was more surprising was the skill 'Saint's Protection'. The skill had a buff ability that could increase his attack and defense, both magical and physical, by 30% of his Holy Power for fifteen minutes. This meant that with over 4,000 Holy Power, Minhyuk could add 1,333 points to his physical and magical attack and defense for fifteen whole minutes. With the Saint's Sword...

'I think I can kill the demonic race in just one strike, right?'

Minhyuk was completely satisfied. It was not something delicious, but increasing his strength meant that he could find more delicious things to eat.

Then, at that moment...

"Y...you..."

...Loyna had finished each and every single grain of rice in her bowl. When her eyes made contact with Minhyuk, her face started to redden. She was at a loss for words for quite some time. After deliberating for a long time, she finally decided to just spit it out. She said, "It...it's fluttering in excitement."

“...?”

Saintess Loyna felt like her mind was being corrupted by the devil. She kept shouting in her head as she ate the dish, ‘No, Loyna! You’re the Saintess, you should maintain your dignity!!’

Alas, her hands and mouth did not stop moving. Loyna could not get enough of the spicy and savory flavor of the dish in front of her. No matter how hard she tried to reprimand herself, her spoon kept on moving without any pause at all.

By the time she regained her senses, she realized that she ate everything down to the very last grain. Her bowl looked as if the person that ate it did not even want to leave anything to waste.

Then, Loyna’s eyes met with Minhyuk’s eyes. She was both flustered and embarrassed as her mind went blank for a moment. It did not occur to her at first, but as she stared at his eyes, her heart continued to tremble.

‘Aaaaaaaah! I was charmed by a sexy man who can cook!’

Then, an absurd idea floated in her head. She thought, ‘If I marry this man, will I be able to eat the dishes that he will make for the rest of my life?’

Still, Loyna was a Saintess. She could not do something like that at all.

‘Should I show him my admiration and that I enjoyed his meal? Or should I pretend that that wasn’t the case at all? It’s too delicious for me to pretend that I did not enjoy it at all. What should I say?’

Then, she spat out the words that she kept in her chest. She shouted that it was fluttering!

“...?”

“...”

Loyna’s face flushed even more. She quickly hid her face behind her palms completely at a loss for words.

Then, Minhyuk smiled at her and said, “My heart also flutters when there’s delicious food in front of me. My heart will thump wildly whenever I smell such a delicious scent and I will always want to look for them. This is what cooking is all about.”

Minhyuk smiled widely as he spoke to her.

‘I...is he trying to save me from my embarrassment like this?’

In truth, Minhyuk was just talking about the essence of cooking. His heart would flutter whenever he saw chicken, and he loved pizza more than anybody else. Without knowing that fact, Loyna mistakenly thought that he was being considerate of her.

Then, she reached out her hands toward him and said, “Please give me the Monarch’s Seeds.”

Minhyuk gave her the Monarch’s Seeds as she held them gently in her palms.

“God Athenae who governs over the entirety of this world, please awaken the new power that is concealed within these seeds. Athellujah.”

A bright light suddenly burst out from the seeds. When she saw this happen, Loyna could not help but be surprised. She felt that the power that was in the seeds was something that was surprisingly familiar.

“These seeds must have been sealed by the power of the former Pope of Athenae Religion. ?Even though I touched and unsealed it, it seems like there is still some unavailable information in it.”

Then, she handed the seeds back to Minhyuk as he quickly checked the information.

(Monarch’s Seeds)

Material Grade: God

Special Abilities: ???

Description: These seeds have been unsealed by Loyna. However, the power within them is still hidden behind a veil. Plant and grow the seeds and you’ll know what they are.

Loyna continued to say, “I’m not certain, but I think the former pope and the previous owner of these seeds have predicted the future and decided to seal them. Just like in the description, you’ll only know what it is if you plant them.”

Minhyuk smiled wryly and said, “Do you think they will grow into something delicious?”

“...I don’t know about that, but one thing’s for sure, something with a vast amount of Holy Power will come out of those seeds.”

“I see.”

Loyna opened her mouth to speak again, “Now that you have drawn the Saint’s Sword, there’s one thing that you have to do.”

“What’s that?”

“You have to go to the Papal Office and meet with the pope.”

Chapter 228: The Birth of Minhyuk Religion

Minhyuk headed towards the Papal Office at Loyna’s request. He obediently accepted Loyna’s request because of only one thing.

‘Wine and rice cake?’

Each time a special occasion happened, the Papal Office would prepare special rice cakes and wine, made and cut personally by the pope himself. Of course, Loyna meant for him to give his greetings to the pope, but Minhyuk was solely interested in the rice cakes. So when he asked her if he could eat the rice cakes with her, she readily agreed.

Rice cake was a kind of snack that had a chewy and soft texture. They had a wide variety of flavours, and among them, what Minhyuk liked the most were the injeolmi and honey rice cake. He could already imagine the sweetness and chewiness of the injeolmi that was covered with yellow bean powder, as he pictured placing it in his mouth.

With those pictures in his mind, Minhyuk finally arrived at the Papal Office. It was at that place where he met Pope Carunu.

“Boy, are you the one that moved the Saint’s sword?”

“That’s right, Holy Father.”

“That’s surprising. A heroic hero like you will definitely lead our Athenae Religion to salvation,” the pope said with a gentle smile.

Not long after, Papal Knight Voloch stood in front of Minhyuk. He handed Minhyuk a cloth that was filled with the carefully selected set of rice cakes. He also handed a huge glass jar that was filled with wine.

“Since this is blessed with God’s strength, the rice cakes inside will not turn cold. Please deliver these rice cakes to the Athenae Believers.”

[Quest: Deliver the Rice Cakes and Wine to the Athenae Believers.]

Rank: B

Requirements: The One that pulled out the Saint’s Sword.

Rewards: Papal Relic

Penalty for Failure: A decrease in the Pope’s favor

Description: You’re the special person who pulled out the Saint’s Sword. By simply delivering these rice cakes and wine, you will be given one of the four Papal Relics.

‘Oh...’

Minhyuk nodded. He was the one who pulled out the Saint’s sword, so he knew he had to do it. However, despite it being a simple quest, the rewards seemed to be exceptional.

Then, a thought suddenly flashed in his head. Minhyuk asked, “Are there any extremely delicious foods that represent the Athenae Religion? Perhaps something that only the pope can eat?”

“Something I eat... Haha!” The pope laughed loudly.

Minhyuk was trying to get other quests that the pope could give if he would reward him with that kind of food. Thoughts were brewing in his head when the pope continued, “Ah, boy. I guess you haven’t heard that yet. Well, that’s understandable. I heard that you met Loyna after pulling the Saint’s Sword out. Then, you must have come straight here.”

“Yes.”

“Athenae’s Loyna will serve a special food to the person who moved the Saint’s sword.”

“Special food?”

This story was something new to him. And the reason why Pope Carunu, or to be precise, Demon Verus told him something like this was simple. He hoped that he could hurriedly present a great disaster to the Athenae Religion.

“Yes. The special food is the rice cake dumpling soup.”

“...!”

Minhyuk’s body trembled and shuddered in shock.

“Wh...what?”

“Rice cake dumpling soup. The priests of Athenae would farm and make the rice cake dumpling soup with carefully selected ingredients that can be found only once every 100 years. Of course, it doesn’t have any meat in it, but it has Gorad’s Meat Tree, which tastes similar to meat. It tastes really good. It’s a special dish served every 100 years and is specially made for the nobles.”

“Wow...!”

A rice cake dumpling soup that was made with carefully selected ingredients and can only be served once every 100 years!

When he thought about that, Minhyuk felt a bit angry. He thought, ‘How can Loyna ask me to do this while forgetting something so important?’

“I have to quickly deliver these rice cakes and wine!”

“Yes. That would be great.”

Carunu smiled generously at him as Minhyuk left the Papal Office. As soon as Minhyuk stepped out, Carunu’s mouth curled up into an evil grin. He suddenly thought, ‘A man that likes to eat...’

Carunu’s brows furrowed when that thought came to mind. He was not sure but if that was the case, then he would definitely eat the rice cake and wine. Quickly, he shook his head to get rid of that thought. There was still the Pope’s Relic and it was a valuable, priceless thing that one could not buy with money! According to the rumors, each one of the relics were legendary artifacts. However, just in case...

‘I must lend my strength to the Devil Worshipper Carn.’

Minhyuk was trembling with excitement as he rode the carriage on his way back to the Athenae Temple. This was because he had the warm rice cake set in his arms!

“Hiyaa. I wonder how delicious they are. This probably has a lot of delicious things like injeolmi, siru rice cake, and honey rice cake in here, right?”

Minhyuk laughed loudly.

‘I will be very happy if I can eat this much rice cakes all on my own...’

Then, he thought, ‘Shall we see what it looks like?’

It was not a sin to look at the rice cakes, right? The symbol of the Pope of Athenae greeted him after he gently untied the cloth. Minhyuk peered at the contents inside as he caressed the symbol on the lid. He could clearly see honey rice cakes that were coated liberally with honey, injeolmis that were sprinkled generously with yellow bean powder, rainbow rice cake and even white steamed rice cake.

“Wow...”

Minhyuk gulped loudly. Then, at that moment, he heard a sudden notification.

[Rice Cake Set.]

[There are hidden and unique abilities sealed inside.]

[You can use the Ingredients Appraisal Skill to check the sealed abilities.]

“Huh?”

Minhyuk was taken aback when he saw the notifications.

‘The hidden and unique abilities are sealed?’

He began to wonder in surprise.

‘What’s this? Why is the power sealed...’

Minhyuk tilted his head in confusion. He recalled the time when he found the rabbit’s liver. This situation was somewhat similar to that time. However, he thought that it was also quite strange to hide some power in this kind of food.

‘Why?’

Thinking back, he clearly recalled that the unsealed rabbit’s liver had clearly become more delicious and special after he released the seal. So without any hesitation, Minhyuk used his Ingredients Appraisal Skill.

[Appraising ingredients.]

[A -3 on all stats will be implemented according to the penalty.]

[The ingredients have all been appraised.]

[You can now check the unique abilities sealed in the rice cake set.]

(Demon Verus’ Disaster Rice Cake)

Ingredient Grade: Medicine containing the power of the demons.

Special Abilities:

?As soon as you eat this, a powerful explosion would happen depending on the strength of your holy power.

?As soon as you eat this, the Demon’s Plague will spread.

?If Saintess Loyna eats the special injeolmi, then she would become a demonic human.

Description: This is a rice cake set that Demon Verus specially prepared to destroy the Athenae Religion in preparation for the war.

“...!”

Minhyuk’s eyes widened in shock.

‘Demon Verus?’

It was a name that he had heard from Gremory, and the moment he thought of the name...

‘No way! The Pope is Demon Verus...?’

That was when Minhyuk knew.

‘Then, this...’

He knew that this rice cake set was something that would become his and his alone.

‘Loyna! This is a bad rice cake that’s trying to hurt you so I’ll eat it all for you!!’

He had decided, for the sake of the people!

Loyna and the Athenae Temple together with the fanatics, including Kenneth, who believed and followed me... They will be killed if they eat this, right? Then, I’m going to eat everything to get rid of it!

“It’s not because I want to eat the rice cakes!!!”

Then, he reached his hand out towards the rice cakes.

“I’m going crazy!!”

Team Leader Park was already facing tremendous difficulties the moment he came back from his vacation. The same went for the Story Creation Team that was right behind him.

“N...nooooooooooooo!”

“Don’t eat thaaaaaat!”

“D...don’t eat that honey rice cake, you son of a bitch!!”

They had struggled for two months just to create this episode. Originally, the episode should have moved in the direction where the Demon Worshiper Carn would move the Saint’s Sword and receive the rice cakes from Demon Verus. They would then drag the Athenae Temple down to hell. In addition, the Saintess Loyna would also become a demonic human. A massive war would then break out, and she would attack the human world together with the demon race and the demonic beasts. This was how the story should turn out. Unfortunately, right now, the story was slowly falling apart, right in front of their eyes.

“...But he looks like he’s really enjoying it. Wow. That honey rice cake actually looks delicious. If I bite into that, honey will flow out, right?”

“Hey, you punk! Right now, the honey rice cake is not one of our problems!”

Team Leader Jung Yungcheol, the head of the Creation Team, turned his head to look at the new Creation Team member. However, he also muttered under his breath as he looked back at the monitor. He said, “He...he’s eating so deliciously!! Eyy! So annoying!”

“...What should we do now?”

It was quite hard for them to meddle with the story once it had been created.

“The key is how will Demon Verus react next.”

Of course, that did not mean that a massive war would not break out. There was only a high probability that Saintess Loyna would be on the side of the humans, instead of the side of the demons.

‘No. To be exact, that’s not the right term. There’s a high chance that she will become a person who will serve under Player Minhyuk.’

Honey rice cakes had a wide variety, coming in shades of pink, green, white, or even plenty of other colors. Minhyuk quickly picked up a honey rice cake with his hand. His fingers were greased with oil as he placed the honey rice cake in his mouth. He could taste the chewy texture of the honey rice cake, as well as the sweet sugary filling in every bite. It was a flavor that could make him smile happily.

The next thing that he picked up was injeolmi. The still warm injeolmi stained his fingers with some yellow-y powder before he placed it in his mouth. The injeolmi, which was as warm as freshly baked white bread, was so delicious that he couldn’t help but sigh in awe.

Next, he took a white steamed rice cake. Every chew of the white steamed rice cake would spread a bit of sweetness in his mouth. It might look plain and tasteless on the surface, but a single piece of white steamed rice cake was enough to make one feel full.

This time, he picked some bean rice cake. The green rice cake, that was filled with sweet beans, filled his mouth with a sweet and rich flavor in every bite.

“Hwahahahaha!?I’ll get rid of all these bad rice cakes!”

There was one thing that he needed to have while eating these rice cakes. If others wanted to drink tea with their rice cakes, Minhyuk tended to drink something uniquely different. It was none other than sikhye. Sikhye with ice that bobbed up and down the glass!

After taking a bottle out of his inventory, he quickly shook it with his hand to make the rice grains in the sikhye dance. After doing all that, he added a straw inside the bottle, just like those that one could get at a sauna. He gulped down the sikhye eagerly, smiling softly at the bittersweet aftertaste of the sikhye.

“Kgghk!”

Minhyuk bursted in admiration after drinking sikhye, while his mind turned blank from the brain freeze. Then, he continued to enjoy the rest of the rice cakes together with his sikhye. Finally, he ate the last piece of songpyeon.

He had been hearing notifications non-stop ever since he started eating the rice cakes, but all of the negative conditions were blocked by his invincible body. He laughed happily as he realized something.

‘Le...let’s see...’

Minhyuk realized that he overlooked something after eating every piece of rice cake.

‘Will they believe me if I go back to Athenae Temple and confidently told them that I ate all the rice cakes that were filled with demonic power?’

The answer was definitely a straight ‘NO’. That was why he believed that it would have been better if he told the priests the reason in advance.

‘I’m, I’m in trouble...’

‘I don’t have any rice cake with me right now, how will they even believe me? Will they even believe me if I said that the pope is currently Demon Verus?’

Right now, Minhyuk believed that there was a high possibility that he would be hunted down by the entire religion. He was something?like?a benefactor, but was?not?a benefactor as of now.

At that moment, he heard the voice of the coachman. He had asked the coachman to stop the carriage for a moment as he ate the rice cakes.

“I think you’ll have to get off for a moment.”

Minhyuk opened the doors of the carriage at the coachman’s words.

He saw the commander of the Paladins, Corr, as well as Saintess Loyna covered in sweat, as they ran towards him.

Chapter 229: The New Vassal

Corr’s expression was very grave. A flash of surprise appeared on his face when he saw the empty rice cake box, but it immediately became grave again. He said, “Let me escort you.”

Corr said this with an extremely serious expression! It seemed like Minhyuk had become a felon. Alas. He was treated like a bad person, even though he did something good. Minhyuk hung his head down and thought,?‘Sob... But the rice cakes were really delicious.’

Minhyuk believed that he would be given severe punishments. What was worse was that even Corr, who was standing in front of him, was a very strong person. Minhyuk thought that there were definitely going to be punishments waiting for him in the Athenae Temple.

Meanwhile, Corr sent a pigeon over.

Flap, flap, flap.

Rafael, the number one in Korea's Paladin Rankings, was on his way to Athenae Temple. He thought, 'Today is the day that Loyna will pray in the Athenae Temple.'

This was the day when Loyna would make her public appearance. Plenty of players would flock to the temple just to see her face. The number one Paladin, Rafael, was smitten with her. It was strange for players to have a crush on NPCs, but he could not help it since she was such a beautiful woman.

Just like he had expected, there were plenty of people flocking to the Athenae Temple.

"It's the number one in the Paladin rankings, Rafael!"

"Wow!"

However, even though Rafael had such a high position, he was still nervous whenever he entered the temple. He was also a member of the Athenae Religion, but he surmised that Loyna only saw him as an ant on the sidewalk.

'But that's her charm!'

Rafael had a dream. He dreamt that he would be able to brush his fingers against her palms one day.

Just like that, more than thousands of players gathered in the temple. Then, hundreds of Paladins and Athenean priests began to move. That was when Loyna appeared in front of him.

"Wow...!"

"She's really beautiful!"

"It's not only in Athenae! I believe she's the most beautiful woman in the world!"

"Joy Co. Ltd. said that there would be no woman that is more beautiful than Loyna!"

The players were all in awe and admiration as they watched her move forward.

Rafael followed Loyna's figure, only to see a carriage parked with the Paladin Commander and a sulky man, presumably a foreigner, coming down.

"What's this? Is he a felon of the Athenae Religion?"

"Corr will not move unless he's escorting Loyna or guarding against a great sinner in the Athenae Religion, right?"

"That's right. He's probably a great sinner."

This was the thought that passed through the heads of countless players. But then, an extraordinary thing happened in front of them. All of the priests and paladins knelt down on one knee. Their actions were uniformly done without the slightest bit of error at all.

"We greet Athenae Religion's benefactor! Brother Minhyuk!"

"...!"

"...!"

"...!"

They could not believe that the followers of the Athenae Religion, who served the God of Athenae and were well known to be proud and strict, would actually kneel down like this.

Then, they saw Loyna walking towards the mysterious player. She slowly bent down on one knee, grasped the back of the hand of the man and kissed it with her soft and plump lips. She said, "I, Saintess Loyna, swear to respect and cherish the Athenae Religion's benefactor, Minhyuk, forever."

Then, she smiled softly as she slowly raised her head to look at him. The players felt extreme shock and jealousy when they saw her reddened cheeks.

"N...no way...!"

"M...my Loyna!!"

"That look is definitely...!"

"Who the hell is that punk!"

"I'll kill you for sure!"

He was a thief! A thief that robbed all the people, regardless of their age, of their dream woman!

"...?"

As for Minhyuk, the great 'sinner', tilted his head in confusion.

'What's going on here?'

Three hours ago.

The Papal Knight Voloch looked at Minhyuk in confusion. After all, Minhyuk looked extremely angry after leaving the Papal Office. Hence, Voloch said, "Your expression doesn't look good."

"Yes. I feel very,?very?bad."

"How come?"

"My goodness! Saintess Loyna should have given me the rice cake dumpling soup, but she did not even mention it to me! Ah! How could she do that?"

"..."

Voloch was left speechless.

Saintess Loyna's beauty was enough to make plenty of people feel full just by looking at her. However, the foreigner Minhyuk was angry that such a beautiful woman did not give him the rice cake dumpling soup.

'I...I think he's really angry?'

Voloch could tell by Minhyuk's labored breathing that he was trying to hold in his anger. He watched as the huffing Minhyuk called the carriage over.

"Do you really not want us to see you off?"

“To be honest, I want to be alone with these rice cakes, more than having your company.”

“...”

‘He’s so strange. But, he’s still the man that pulled out the Saint's Sword.’

Voloch watched the carriage disappear in the distance as he proceeded with his work as usual. Two hours later, Voloch, who was in the middle of his work, suddenly stopped.

‘Rice cake dumpling soup...?’

That was the only reason why he suddenly stopped. His brows furrowed in thought.

‘But, I don’t think it’s just rice cake dumpling soup?’

To be exact, the Papal Office would usually make rice cake dumpling soup with ‘joraengi rice cake’. However, the word joraengi was missing from the words that he had heard earlier.

His brows furrowed further as he thought about the things that happened recently. In fact, something strange also happened a few days ago. Pope Carunu had described God Athenae as ‘God’s Will’ but Voloch had never heard the Pope use such an expression before. He would usually say ‘It’s His will’, not ‘God’s will’.

‘Something’s not right.’

Voloch also realized that the Pope never went out of the prayer room these days. He faintly realized that something was very, very wrong. He moved quickly towards the prayer room and did something that he normally would never do. He peeped through a small gap in the door.

That was when he saw black demonic energy escaping from Carunu’s body. The demonic energy created a demonic figure that talked sinisterly in the prayer room.

Clatter!

“You bastard!!!” Voloch shouted as he pulled his sword out.

Voloch was named the Pope’s Guardian, a powerhouse who had strength that was beyond that of a Level 610 character.

When he opened the door and entered the room, he saw the Pope collapsing in a heap. There was also the black demonic energy that formed into the shape of a skeleton with horns. This was none other than Verus.

“A disaster will descend upon you... and... you will be unable to stop it... you already... chased the disaster away.?Keuhahaha!”

“...!”

Voloch’s eyes widened in horror as the black demonic energy scattered through the air and disappeared.

‘Disaster? Chased away?’

“The... the rice cake, rice cake...!!!”

Carunu had played a part in making the rice cake that would be gifted to the Athenae believers. However, Carunu was someone that did not even know the 'C' in cooking, so it was quite strange for him to even try to touch the food in the kitchen.

“We...we have to stop Minhyuk!!!”

Unfortunately, it was already two hours since Minhyuk left the Papal Office, so he would have already reached the Athenae Temple by now. It was likely that they would have already eaten the food by now.

Voloch's legs softened as he sank down to the ground.

‘G...Goddamn it...!’

He was not aware of it, but at that time, Minhyuk was actually happily eating the delicious rice cakes.

Loyna smiled softly as she looked at Minhyuk's puzzled expression. They had received a letter sent by Knight Commander Voloch through a pigeon.

[Minhyuk noticed the strange smell and taste of the rice cakes beforehand and ate all of the rice cakes to save our Athenae Religion. He saved us from a crisis, just like the legend of the Saint's Sword that came down to save us and bring us to salvation.]

Loyna was surprised. She realized that he was a decent man.

‘He ate the rice cakes because he wanted to?’

She believed that such a thought was too much to accuse of someone like him.

‘Then?’

Loyna firmly believed that Minhyuk had noticed it faster than them, so he ate all of the rice cakes before it could even wreak havoc in the temple. He even deliberately avoided the warp and chose the carriage, instead of coming directly to Athenae Temple from the Papal Office.

Loyna said, “We heard from Sir Voloch, the Pope's Guardian. You purposely took the rice cakes and used a carriage instead of warping here.”

“...?”

Minhyuk was confused. He thought to himself, ‘But, I told Voloch that I wanted to savor the warmth of the rice cakes, that's why I rode the carriage?’

Loyna continued to say, “You knew the moment you received it! You knew that it would bring forth a disaster, so you rode in a carriage and drove further away from the Athenae Temple. You did this to save us, the Athenae Religion!”

Loyna's eyes reddened.

‘Th...that's not it... I just want to feel the warmth of the rice cakes.’

“In addition! You must have tried to find ways to get rid of the disaster, but you couldn’t... That’s why you...”

In the end, tears fell down from Loyna’s eyes. She said, “You sacrificed yourself! You ate all of the rice cakes and got rid of their existence. We know that foreigners are living the life of the immortals, since you’re blessed by God Athenae, but it wouldn’t erase the pain that you will experience in the process of dying! Oh, how painful it must have been!”

Loyna squeezed her hands together to stop them from shaking and trembling.

Looking at the scene, Minhyuk thought that he should not mention the fact that he ate the rice cakes, just because he wanted to eat them. Thinking quickly, he just said, “I succeeded in eradicating the rice cakes. It was really a hard and painful process. I really had no choice but to eat them all! It was inevitable!”

“Aaaaaaaaah!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Loyna, the priests and the paladins all lamented for him and the sufferings that he experienced. Meanwhile, the thought that flashed through Minhyuk’s head was...

‘Nice! I killed two birds with one stone! I ate all the rice cakes and the Athenae Temple fell in love with me!’

The deeply moved Loyna continued to shed tears.

.

Demon worshippers existed all over the world and they believed in different existences. The demons had a system that divided the Demon Monarchs into three.

The first Demon Monarch was Verus.

The second Demon Monarch was Gorac.

The third Demon Monarch was Gremory.

Demon Worshipper Carn was one of Verus’ worshippers. To be precise, he was once the fourth among the Pinnacle Strong Men in the world. Then, he was called on by Verus and he became one of his worshippers.

Verus originally gave Carn his demonic energy so that he could temporarily convert his demonic energy into holy power. Using that power, he would move the Saint's Sword, meet with Verus and deliver the rice cakes that were filled with curses and disasters to the Athenae Temple. All of a sudden, everything went awry and had gone wrong, just because of a foreigner.

Just when he was trying to figure out a way to deal with him, he heard the voice of Demon Verus.

[I will pretend to be caught by the Athenae Religion. If I cannot use the rice cakes and wine to curse and bring down the Athenae Religion to hell, then I will temporarily lend you my strength. Perhaps, I can drive the Athenae Priests towards the Papal Office all by myself. At that time, you should go and kill Loyna.]

Along with his words, a parchment and a bottle filled with black liquid appeared in front of Carn. Then, he checked it right away.

[Verus' Space Distortion Parchment.]

The space distortion parchment could create a boundary and block everyone from entering the space within a ten-meter radius from the parchment user. The duration of the parchment was one hour.

After Carn checked the information about the bottle filled with black liquid, he was surprised.

‘If I drink this liquid...’

All of his stats would be affected by demonic energy and would be temporarily increased by more than 30%. In other words, the previous fourth Pinnacle Strong Man would become even stronger, with just this bottle of liquid.

In the end, their plan to make the Athenae Religion fall into hell with the rice cakes had failed.

Right now, Carn turned his head. He could see the priests, paladins, and even Loyna acting polite towards the foreigner chef.

Loyna finally started her journey as she climbed the carriage together with the foreigner. The fancy carriage was pulled by pure white horses.

Carn could see that even the commander of the paladins, who firmly supported Loyna, was within the ten-meter range. To be honest, if the commander of the paladins, Corr, was removed from the picture, he would be able to kill Loyna easily. After all, except for the name Saintess and her buffing ability, Loyna was extremely weak.

‘Now’s the time.’

Poof!

He quickly opened the cap of the bottle. And...

Gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp—

...he gulped the contents of the bottle.

Chapter 230: The New Vassal

Paladin Corr was less powerful than Pope’s Guardian Voloch. However, he also held an immense amount of Holy Power and strength. It was unclear whether any of the players in the Korean Server of Athenae would be able to beat him in a fight.

Corr’s chest strangely felt empty and heartbroken. He thought, ‘The light in her eyes, that expression, that tone of voice...’

Corr's expression was bitter as he escorted Loyna's carriage. He could see Loyna's eyes lingering on the chef's face. It was clearly an expression of love.

When he reported that Minhyuk had sacrificed himself to eat the rice cakes and save the Athenae Religion, Loyna had shed tears that were filled with emotions. Of course, Corr also thought of the same thing. He was a great and cool guy. However, the moment he saw Loyna act like that, he felt his chest turn empty. That was right! Corr also adored her! He knew that it was not something that a paladin should do, but the Loyna was so beautiful that no woman was comparable to her. He could not help but fall in love with her.

At that moment...

"...What's that?"

"What's that over there?"

"Gasp?!"

"Hey, hey, hey! Wh...what the hell is that?"

...the surroundings started to get noisy. Paladin Corr turned his head to look at the commotion. He saw hundreds of gigantic strands of demonic energy pouring down from the sky.

"Sh...shit!"

"F*ck!"

"Paladins! Priests!!"

Loyna wanted everyone to step back, leaving only Corr behind. This meant that she wanted to speak with Minhyuk alone. Corr rushed to call them back, but it was all too late.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Powerful demonic energy began to fall in all directions. Then, demonic humans began to pop out from all over the place.

"Follow Verus!"

"Verus is the only monarch in this world!!"

Demonic humans appeared everywhere. They were literally demon worshippers. The current problem was that these worshippers who appeared were well-prepared, while everyone else was caught off-guard.

Bang! Bang, bang!

"Keuaaack!"

"Aaaaaaaaargh!"

"What the hell. F*cker!!"

The players were all in disarray. Their screams rang loudly the moment some of them had been forced to log out. Most of them even tore their return parchments and left the premises. Corr flew up in the sky.

“Calm down! Keep the bastards out of the carriage!” Corr shouted loudly. Unfortunately, he could see that the Athenae priests as well as the paladins were only halfway there.

‘Don’t tell me...’

Corr finally realized that Verus deliberately showed himself in front of Sir Voloch. If that was the case, then it made sense for him to calculate this situation. Right now, more than half of the paladins and priests were headed towards the Papal Office in order to remove the demonic energy that Demon Verus had cast over at the place.

Slash—

After Corr slashed down on one of the demonic humans, he could see a presence following behind.

Bang!

It was Carn, the fourth Pinnacle Strong Man, who was now a demon worshipper.

[Frightening Worshipper, Strengthened Pinnacle Strong Man. Carn has appeared!]

[You have encountered one of the Pinnacle Strong Men.]

[Abnormal State. Demon’s Breath has been triggered.]

[Your breathing will get blocked.]

[Your HP will now begin to continuously decrease.]

[Demonic Humans will become 30% more powerful.]

[Whoever hunts and kills one of the Pinnacle Strong Men will gain plenty of rewards.]

The players heard the series of notifications.

“Strengthened Pinnacle Strong Man?”

“The fourth Pinnacle Strong Man? So far, the only one to have appeared was the fifth Pinnacle Strong Man, right?!”

“Shit, if he’s strengthened then, how strong is he now?!”

“Wh...what? C...cold sweat is... I can’t breathe well...!”

The players began to curse and complain about their difficulties in breathing that was caused by Demon’s Breath. The strength of the Pinnacle Strong Men was inversely proportionate to their number. This meant that the eighth Pinnacle Strong Man, Rumad, who died not too long ago, was the weakest among them.

Stab!

“Keuaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaaack!”

With Carn’s appearance, the demonic humans gained more strength.

[Judge’s Sword.]

[The sword blessed by God Athenae will fly towards the enemies.]

Swoooooooooosh!

A bright sword light stretched out from Corr’s sword. With Corr’s high Holy Power, the power of his Judge’s Sword attack would double in strength. This ability was a fatal blow to his enemies that wielded demonic energy.

However, Carn just ran forward. The sword light that Corr shot out was brutally extinguished with a black lightning bolt that fell down from the air.

Bang, bang!

“...!”

Corr was shocked. An attack could only be offsetted when the demonic energy was more powerful than the Holy Power. That was when Corr saw an unknown barrier that had started to enclose a ten-meter radius.

[You have been caught in Verus’ boundaries.]

[Those who have been caught in the boundary will not be able to use any skills related to Holy Power, due to the power of Verus.]

“W...we can’t use any skills related to Holy Power?”

“D...did you hear that? They can’t use any Holy Power related skills there!”

“Shit...!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

“Corr!”

“Loyna!”

The barrier prevented the priests and barriers from entering the area. Meanwhile, the players...

“Wh...what the hell is happening right now... Don’t tell me that our Loyna...”

“Are they trying to kill Loyna?”

“No way! You m*th*r*f*ck*ng bastards! I’m not going to run away!”

“What? Why are you going to make a stand?! You’re going to lose a level!”

“Ptew!?A man is going to fight for the woman that he loves!”

“Protect Loyna!”

“Uwooooooooo!?Don’t touch our Loyna!”

Most of the remaining players did not run away and chose to make a stand on this battlefield to protect Loyna. However, the problem was something else. Despite their strong willpower, they could not get into the barrier where Loyna was. They had enough power after easily dealing with the pitiful amount of demonic humans outside the barrier, but other than that, they could not do anything at all.

“I can’t go inside!”

“Damn it!”

“What the hell!”

The players, priests and paladins were all standing restless just outside the barrier. The people outside of the barrier had no choice but to just helplessly watch the situation inside. They even witnessed Paladin Corr being knocked down by Carn.

“Urrrrgh!”

Carn slowly approached Corr, but just as he was about to strike his sword down to cut his neck off...

“Stop.”

“...”

...the edges of Carn’s mouth were almost ripped in two with his wicked grin. This was because the Saintess herself had come out of the carriage, taking one or two steps forward.

“Aren’t you here for me?”

Carn nodded.

“No!!”

“Do we have no choice at all...!”

“Shit...!”

Meanwhile, various players were broadcasting the attack in the Athenae Temple over the internet.

[lvlladll34: No! Don’t touch our Loyna!]

[Loyna’sMine: That bastard! I’ll tear him to pieces...!!]

[TheDevilWearsPanties: ...It seems like Loyna is going to die. Sigh... Just like this, Loyna will become a demonic human...

.

Thanks to the high speed internet, everyone around the world saw the broadcast. Every single one of them expected that Loyna would die.

In Japan, there was a group of fanatics, whose members were in love with Loyna. Watanabe, the president of the LLF fan cafe, was watching the real-time live broadcasts in Korea. He had a fat face filled with pimples.

“L...Loyna-chan!!!” He screamed loudly as his hands sweated buckets while he hugged a Loyna pillow.

“You’re even stopping other’s deaths by sacrificing yourself, Loyna-chan...! You can’t die!”

Watanabe bursted into tears. Then, two teardrops fell on the Loyna pillow that he was holding so tightly, as he watched Carn slowly approach Loyna in the video. Loyna suddenly knelt down as she began to pray to God Athenae. He watched as Carn’s hand that was holding the sword slowly went up in the air.

“P...please... Someone, anyone, please save our Loyna-chan!!!” Watanabe cried loudly but based on the comments that he had seen, it seemed like breaking through the boundary set by Carn was an impossible feat.

There were only two people inside the carriage, one was Loyna and the other one was a chef that was said to be visiting Athenae Temple for sightseeing. Even Corr, who surpassed the number one in the Paladin rankings, fell under the hands of Carn. It would be nigh impossible for the chef to intervene. It seemed like Loyna also knew of that fact.

Just as Carn’s sword was about to strike down.

[Get your hands off of her because she’s important to me.]

He heard an unidentified voice. When Watanabe turned to look at the direction of the sound, he could see a man clad in shabby armor through the screen. The player was wearing a helmet with a small hand axe hanging behind his back. In addition, the artifacts that he had on his body were all too worn out. For some reason, Watanabe felt a sense of camaraderie with this player.

‘That player wants to protect Loyna too!’

He looked at the man with reddened eyes as the comment started to come up.

[He must be feeling the same way as us.]

[He also wants to protect our Loyna-chan!]

[But... He will not be able to protect Loyna-chan...??]

[That Pinnacle Strong Man is too powerful for him to be able to protect Loyna...]

Everyone did not have high hopes for him, and the same was true for Watanabe. However, something extraordinary happened the very next moment. Everything the man wore began to fade away and scatter in the air. What appeared in their place, was a frying pan on his back, as well as a rugged-looking, yet familiar, helmet.

“...!”

Watanabe's eyes widened in shock. He knew that not too long ago, there was an unidentified player that swept everything away in Athenae: Korean War. That man's name was 'Minhyuk'. Some people called him the Frying Pan Killer.

And he had appeared in front of them.

Murmur, murmur.

"That's the Frying Pan Killer, right?"

"F...Frying Pan Killer?!"

The players staying outside of the barrier started to make a fuss.

The Frying Pan Killer had completely disappeared from their sights after Athenae: Korean War. However, just a few days ago, he was able to meet the expectations of the players with the announcement of his third entrance into the Hall of Kings.

Right now, he had appeared in front of them.

Loyna said to Minhyuk in the carriage, "Stay inside the carriage. I don't want to see you die needlessly and disappear in front of me."

That was clearly what she had told him earlier, but he still came out and said, "Get your hands off of her because she's important to me."

When she heard his words, Loyna's heart thumped loudly. She had never felt something like this in her entire life.

Loyna was not aware of Minhyuk's identity as the Frying Pan Killer. Perhaps for her, the Frying Pan Killer was just your run-of-the-mill ranker that was well known in the whole Athenae world. However, his words thrilled her heart.

"I...in order to protect me..."

Minhyuk tried to protect her even when he knew that he would die. Perhaps...!

"Maybe, no... clearly, he also likes me too..."

That has to be the reason why he called her his 'important person'!

"D...don't try to sacrifice yourself because of me. I...I'm fully aware of your feelings. That's why you should run away! Please!"

"...You know how I feel? You know how I feel... Then, how can you get out of the carriage without me! You're a person who's not supposed to die. Loyna! I'll protect you."

"Aaaaaaaaah..."

He was a man who just wanted to protect her. Loyna felt the beating of her heart running amok inside her chest.

“Thanks.”

“Thanks.”

There was only one reason why Minhyuk was angry.

‘You dare touch Loyna?!’

If Loyna died, then Minhyuk would feel sad for a few days. He would be sad because of one reason, and one reason alone. It was because she had not cooked a rice cake dumpling soup for him yet.

How delicious must it be! A rice cake dumpling soup made with ingredients that can only be found every hundred years! And that recipe is with Loyna!

Due to this, she had become an important asset that Minhyuk needed to protect.

‘For rice cake dumpling soup!!!!’

Minhyuk made a promise to himself. He would protect the person who would make his rice cake dumpling soup. He would definitely sprinkle some crispy seaweed powder on top, so he could thoroughly enjoy his warm rice cake dumpling soup!

At that moment, Loyna, who had counted her chickens before they hatched, was shedding tears.

Minhyuk took a sword out of his inventory. It was none other than the Saint’s Sword. Then, a bright light burst out of the Saint’s Sword. The light illuminated everything, as if it would reveal all of the secrets of the world.