

Gourmet 581

Chapter 581: Louvert Guild

[Louvert Guild goes under the command of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[Louvert Guild has a total of 3,211 guild members.]

[Louvert Guild is the best Chef's Guild in Asgan Continent, an achievement only obtained by them.]

[People will come to visit the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to taste the delicious food that the kingdom has to offer.]

Minhyuk, who was still sitting on his throne, absorbed the Louvert Guild with a wide and happy smile on his face. Based on Minhyuk's standards, the Louvert Guild was a great guild. While Black was said to be egoistic and terrible at business, if one looked at his attitude in the perspective of a 'guild master', his business ethics were actually correct.

'Turning Louvert Guild into the best Chef's Guild is something that he should be proud about. He definitely spent a lot of money during the process.'

Meanwhile, Black was very curious as to what kind of role he would be given in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. After all, he used to be the head of Louvert Guild, the best chef in Asgan Continent, and one of the top ten chefs in the world.

"What jobs should we take?"

'Let's see...' Minhyuk rubbed his chin in thought. He had already thought of the perfect job for them.

On the other hand, Black and the Louvert Guild executives had no doubts whatsoever that talented people like them would be given important roles in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

'For sure...!'

'I'm sure we'll be given an extremely important task!!!'

'We'll definitely be given a position in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom that will gain the attention of everyone in the world!!!'

Thirty minutes later.

"...???"

"...???"

"...???"

"Wash this part over here."

"...???"

“...???”

“...???”

“No, why are you so bad at washing the dishes?”

“S, sorry...”

The eight executives and Twilight Chef Black were all standing in line in front of Kaistra, the young African boy, master of the Divine Beast, and the ‘God of Dishwashing’, learning how to wash dishes under his supervision.

With the increase in the number of migrants and tourists visiting the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to taste their dishes and specialties, it became hard even for Kaistra, the ‘God of Dishwashing’, to handle the influx of dishes that he needed to wash in a single day.

“...???”

Even as he continued to wipe the dishes clean, Black still could not understand what was happening, *‘Me... the great me is washing the dishes?’*

Back when he was sixteen years old, Black started from the bottom in America by washing dishes and ended up reaching his position.

‘But that should not be the case now, right?’

Then, Kaistra cast his ‘God of Dishwashing’ skill, washing hundreds of dishes all at once without even using water.

“Wow...”

“Wow...”

“Wow...”

Black and the executives looked at Kaistra in awe. But Black immediately came to his senses, thinking, *‘Why are you making the great me do the dishes...!’* while trying to take off his rubber gloves. Just when he was about to slip them off and throw them away...

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[As a chef, who has reached a high level, you have taken the initiative and set an example to others by going back to your roots.]

[Your cooking skill proficiency has slightly increased.]

“...???”

Black, who was already halfway through removing his gloves, slipped the rubber gloves back on and started washing the dishes again, accompanied by the loud clattering of plates. The same notifications rang in the ears of the executives. After all, they were also chefs that had reached a high level!

The notifications that rang in their ears made both Black and the executives shocked. For chefs that had risen to a high level, just like them, they would only be able to increase their cooking skill

proficiency by 3% after working for ten straight days. That was already considered to be a tremendous increase. However, they had only been washing dishes for about an hour and already, their cooking skill proficiency had increased by 2%.

In fact, for classes like blacksmiths and chefs, those that had reached a high enough level would rarely be seen doing odd jobs like this. Hence, Athenae's system that was revealed to them now came as a huge shock.

'Oh my god! What incredible foresight...!'

'The Food God must have known that this would happen, that's why he asked us to wash the dishes!!!'

'He wanted us to increase our cooking skill proficiency! What a considerate man...!'

As they washed the dishes, Black suddenly asked, "What did the Food God tell us to do after washing the dishes?"

"He told us to go to Ares and help him with the field work."

They did not shake and tremble like they did before after hearing what they had to do. After all, they finally realized that something amazing was waiting for them there.

When Black and the executives arrived at the field, they were able to taste the 'golden sweet potato', an ingredient developed by the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

'Th, this... What a surprising flavor...!'

'D, delicious...! It's so delicious that I can't stop myself from crying...!'

Then, the farmer managing the field approached them and threw hoes on the ground in front of them. The farmer was none other than Ares, who made a name for himself by broadcasting live in his 'Ares' Country Diaries'.

"If you want to eat the golden sweet potatoes, then you have to dig it yourself."

Black and his executives began digging for sweet potatoes without even saying anything. It was because despite being a simple ingredient, the sweet potato tasted divine.

Thump!

Thump!

Thump!

"I will eat... sweet potatoes...!"

"Golden... sweet potatoes!"

Their eyes seemed to be covered with laser-sharp focus as they continued digging. Then, additional notifications began to ring in their ears.

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[As a chef, who has reached a high level, you have taken the initiative and set an example to others by going back to your roots.]

[Your cooking skill proficiency has slightly increased.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

They were still very much surprised. After digging up enough sweet potatoes to fill their quota, they were given their own rations. After some rest, they began eating their golden sweet potatoes, sweet potatoes that were not cooked, only steamed.

As for Black, he finally realized what the Food God wanted to tell them, *‘Yeah. All this time I believed that high-quality and priceless ingredients were more important...!’*

Excellent dishes were usually a result of high-quality ingredients. But these sweet potatoes were just plain and ordinary ingredients. As a true, genuine chef, he should have known the importance of ingredients and learnt how to make the best dishes out of the ordinary. The Food God was obviously trying to enlighten them on this matter.

Of course, the truth was that Minhyuk only gave them those instructions because he was trying to increase the production of the ‘golden sweet potato’ so he could eat more. But they...

Gulp, gulp—

“Food, Food God... Thank you...”

“D, delicious...”

...all crouched down and ate the golden sweet potato bit by bit in one corner. Seeing them, Ares could not help but whistle. Their backs looked completely familiar to him. That was how people would look most of the time after tasting the golden sweet potato and getting addicted to its flavor.

Black could not wash off the smile of his face as he went to sleep after logging out of the game. The excitement that he was feeling was similar to when he first got a job at a hotel.

‘Fufu. I’ll work hard in washing the dishes and digging in the field tomorrow too. Can’t wait~!’

An exciting night passed by just like that. The next day, a set of notifications greeted Minhyuk when he entered the game.

[Louvert Guild has expressed their loyalty toward the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[Louvert Guild, despite only recently coming under the command of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, has only praises toward the kingdom.]

There was a ‘How is Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?’ survey plastered in the central plaza, where the guilds under the command of the kingdom could cast their votes and leave comments. In there, Louvert Guild’s master Black and the guild executives all gave a perfect score.

[You have been recognized as an outstanding monarch.]

[You have gained 20 CHA.]

“...???”

Recently, Minhyuk’s head was always filled with question marks.

Stars’ Path.

After all of the servers all over the world had integrated, the players could now traverse the Stars’ Path and travel to another continent. Prior to that, various special events, dungeons, and fields usually came together with the appearance of various races and tribes when the Stars’ Path opened. As an example, upon clearing a dungeon for the first time, the players would be able to receive double the rewards, EXP, or drop rate. That was why even though they could immediately go to another continent, quite a few people decided to linger in the Stars’ Path to explore and get the maximum benefits before the special events ended.

However, a strange phenomenon happened when the Stars’ Path opened. A number of players from China’s Cairon Continent started running somewhere and did not even hunt inside the Stars’ Path. The same was true for the players of America. Then, it happened for the players of Japan, Russia, France, Italy, Germany, Vietnam as well. This strange phenomenon happened in all of the continents. All of them ran and ignored the monsters prowling in the hunting grounds in the Stars’ Path.

[The players, as if possessed, gathered as quickly as possible and headed somewhere.]

[Many players have questioned this mysterious phenomenon.]

[They look like they are running a marathon, each country speeding up as if they are saying that they will reach there first.]

[Surprisingly enough, these players are all headed to Asgan Continent.]

[A lot of rumors are spreading wildly right now. There are rumors being spread, about how there is a parchment that would tell the players how to obtain a ‘god rank artifact’ located at the Asgan Continent’s entrance to the Stars’ Path. Some even say that all the countries are secretly plotting together and forming an alliance to fight against the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

[The rumors about how they are forming an alliance to strike Beyond the Heavens Kingdom sound more plausible.]

[Since they have formed an alliance to keep the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in check during the Battle of the Thrones, it’s highly likely that these countries will cooperate to remove the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom from the annals of history.]

[In fact, we can’t deny that each country is feeling hostility as much as they are yearning to be a part of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

These wild and groundless rumors kept on circulating. And amidst the players heading toward Asgan Continents, many BJs and broadcasting stations blended into the mix, with the thought of

broadcasting and filming how these countries tried to pick a fight with the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Haze still could not understand what His Majesty had told her a few days ago.

‘We might not have received the material rewards but we will be able to get far bigger rewards than that.’

She still could not understand the meaning of those words. But then...

Vwoooooooooooooong—

The loud blare of the horns resounded all over the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Haze immediately rushed to check what was happening.

“We’re in a state of emergency!!!”

“Prepare for war!!!”

“All troops assemble!!!”

‘A state of emergency?!’

Haze could not hide the shock on her face. In just a moment, all of the troops had gathered in perfect order. Haze quickly followed along to listen to what happened.

“From what I heard, in the foreigner’s world, many of the foreigners were talking about an alliance to fight against Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?”

Haze could see the truth of the matter. She could tell that these rumors were circulating in the world where the foreigners live. So, they quickly prepared for war.

‘Damn it. Are we going to take damage again?’

Haze was a merchant, as well as the kingdom’s financial manager. Her mind had already drifted far beyond how they would overcome the war and was already lingering on the damages that they would sustain during the process.

Then, Minhyuk, who just logged in, showed up. He climbed on the walls and looked at Haze and the executives all lined up together there. As the sun began to set, the silhouette of millions of troops appeared in front of their eyes.

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

This was a huge army never before seen. Such a number did not even appear during the Battle of the Thrones. They were holding flags representing each of their countries. America, United Kingdom, France, Russia, Japan, China, Taiwan... millions of troops that gathered from each nation marched toward Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. But Minhyuk did not issue any orders to attack.

“Your, Your Majesty...! Why are you not issuing an order to attack?!!!”

Haze could not hide her doubts and confusions. Even the commentators were looking at the scene in shock.

[Why is the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom not stopping the troops’ advance?]

Then, Minhyuk smiled, “Haze, look closely.”

Haze turned to look at Minhyuk in confusion. All she could see was millions of troops marching toward them, their shadows turning the ground black, blocking the light of the setting sun! The troops immediately gathered in front of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s walls.

“This is our bigger reward.”

Then, people from the troops began to step forward and shout...

“I am America’s Cenrich! Beyond the Heavens’ King!!! Please accept us!!!”

“I am Japan’s Mandra! Beyond the Heavens’ King!!! Please allow us to enter and go under the command of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!”

“Beyond the Heavens King!!! The Battle of the Thrones had a huge impact on me. Please let me join you!!!”

“...!”

Their loud and boisterous voices shook the walls of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Meanwhile, the BJs and broadcasting stations that thought that these people came here to fight Beyond the Heavens Kingdom were all left flustered. In fact, all of this had been discussed during the King’s Banquet. Although it seemed like most of the things that happened during the King’s Banquet had been made public, everything that had been discussed, except for those posted in Ztube, during the banquet remained private. Millions of troops were actually asking to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Haze, who watched this scene, felt her heart thump wildly.

‘This huge army wants to enter Beyond the Heavens Kingdom... Goodness, will His Majesty really go beyond a kingdom and establish an empire? Or maybe he would go for a title with a power that’s beyond that of an emperor, a power that can rival a god’s?!’

Just as Haze was still reeling from the shock, Minhyuk uttered words that would bring far bigger shock to her and the rest of the world, “Your request is pending.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The whole world felt choked when they realized that the Food God was in a different class. After all, he had just put on hold the request of millions of people.

Chapter 582: Louvert Guild

Hundreds of millions of people gathered to see Food God Minhyuk during the King's Banquet. There were actually two reasons for it.

First, it was because the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was able to endure plenty of attacks from the allied kingdoms and slaughtered many enemies, despite finishing last in the Battle of the Thrones. In fact, a fan base for Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had been created right after that. After all, even though they were enemies, what the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had achieved was worthy of applause and admiration.

Second, it was because a dream had sprouted in the hearts of these people when they watched the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. They wanted to be a member of the Kingdom! As the server integration was released, everyone's desire and longing to be a part of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom grew hotter and hotter.

Many had asked Minhyuk during the King's Banquet...

'How can we join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?!'

'Will you accept someone at Level 180?!'

'What benefits will we receive if we go to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?!'

'Please answer us, Beyond the Heavens' King!'

Hundreds of millions of people spoke out in a fluster, resulting in a chaotic situation. However, Minhyuk did not look hurried or flustered at all. Perhaps it was because Chairman Kang Minhoo was standing right next to him? Regardless, a true king would not change or falter in front of any situation.

Minhyuk spoke briefly, *'Anyone can join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom as long as they have the will. However, there's no assurance that our Beyond the Heavens Kingdom can accommodate all of you.'*

That was the end of Minhyuk's words. He did not say anything anymore. But the players that heard his words got the idea...

'That's right. Beyond the Heavens Kingdom cannot accommodate all of us.'

'Then, I'll be the first to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!'

'I have to get in position before anybody else!'

The people began to prepare to run to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. They did not even have the time to do an interview about *'Why are you going to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?'*. Of course, some of them were able to do an interview, but the rumors about how they had gathered to 'strike' at Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had become bigger than the story about how they wanted to 'join'.

Still, they did not care. They just ran to this place without a wink of sleep, only to find out that players of different nationalities were also running with the same goal in mind. All they could do was grit their teeth and run faster.

Among these players was Chinese player Veyron, a top ranker that was recognized for his prowess in China. His heart thumped wildly as he thought, *‘I... will become a member of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...!’*

As one of the few that ran the fastest, Veyron could not hide the confusion on his face as he watched the Beyond the Heavens King stand atop the walls and wait for everyone to gather.

‘Shit. If things continue like this, there will be no space left for me in Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. He should have accepted me quickly...!’

The reason why Veyron ran as fast as he could was because he knew that there would be no spot for him if he arrived a step later than the others. After all, the number of players that Beyond the Heavens Kingdom could accommodate was only limited.

As everyone waited, the Beyond the Heavens’ King finally took a step forward. Seeing this, countless people began to clamor for their acceptance to the kingdom. But the Beyond the Heavens’ King looked at them gently and said, “Your request is pending.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“W, What...?!”

“What kind of ridiculous nonsense is that...?!”

“What did you say?!”

Murmur, murmur—

A commotion began to spread widely, like a tidal wave in the ocean. Even the viewers and the commentators that were watching the broadcast were left in shock.

[The millions of players present are all shocked after hearing the words uttered by the Beyond the Heavens’ King.]

[These millions of people came to join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. If they are able to recruit each and every single person present here, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will be able to wield a great power and even become an empire.]

[But the Food God just told them that their request is pending.]

“Are you kidding me?!”

“Do you know who we ran for like that?!!!!”

“Food God!!! Are you trying to mock us?!!!!”

“You have disappointed us!!! Do you want us to gang up on you, huh?!”

It was not that strange if these clamoring players ran wild and turned to attack Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. In a way, their reactions were understandable. Some of them gave up on the new content in the Stars’ Path, while some used their company vacation leave to run here.

But what were the words of the Beyond the Heavens' King?!

"You told us that you will accept us as long as we come here!!!"

"That's it. From this day onwards, Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will be destroyed!"

It would only take a moment for the public's sentiments to change.

And Haze, who watched everything unfold, had been jumping for joy up until a few moments ago. After all, this was the bigger reward that His Majesty had mentioned to her a few days ago. But now, everything was about to turn to ruin. The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom could not afford to fight against millions of people.

'What on earth are we going to do, Your Majesty...!'

Haze was at a loss as she watched the players prepare to attack. At that moment, Haze thought that Minhyuk would have probably realized that he did something wrong, so she turned to look back at him. But he was still smiling!

"...!"

That was when Haze finally understood something, *'Th, that's right...! We can't just accept all of them!'*

She was shocked at Minhyuk's foresight. If they accepted all of the people here now, then it would only spell their destruction. If they recklessly accepted these people, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would be filled with countless spies.

That was not all. Assuming that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was around 30 square meters, such a small piece of land could not accommodate hundreds of people. If all of these people entered Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, the kingdom would literally be oversaturated.

The inns and restaurants, as well as the security of the kingdom, would be lacking. Having a sudden influx of players was not necessarily a good thing. In the first place, the kingdom's territory and land area had to be able to support it.

However, another question arose in Haze's head, *'If he knew that already, why did he let them come here?'* That was the reason why the foreigners were very angry. Why did he give them hope when he would just leave their request on hold?

Then, Minhyuk opened his mouth, "I have already told you that there's no assurance that my kingdom would be able to accommodate you."

"Then you shouldn't have allowed us to come here in the first place!!!"

"Boooooo!!!"

No, Minhyuk had clearly told them, *'There's no assurance that our Beyond the Heavens Kingdom can accommodate all of you.'* However, they made the decision themselves and chose to come here on their own. Minhyuk just opened a 'path', a possibility, for them. However, the angry public could not be appeased with just those words alone. Then, Minhyuk turned around as Golden Mage Ali stepped forward.

[You have activated the Voice Amplification Magic.]

[You have activated the Translucent Gigantification Magic.]

At the same time, a 20-meter translucent figure of Minhyuk appeared on top of the walls of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. The translucent figure wore the same golden crown on his head and acted just like how Minhyuk was acting below. In other words, the magic was cast to make it easy for everyone to see Minhyuk.

“Silence!!!” Minhyuk said, his voice spreading via the amplification magic toward the angry players. For a moment, everyone turned silent. Minhyuk looked at them, his voice filled with dignity as he continued, “What kind of nation is the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in your eyes?!!!”

Everyone that heard Minhyuk’s question, suppressed their anger and began to ponder deeply. What was the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom to them?

‘The best kingdom.’

‘An indomitable kingdom. A kingdom that will never collapse.’

‘A kingdom worthy of adoration and respect.’

‘The very first kingdom created by a player.’

Beyond the Heavens Kingdom had many titles under their belt.

Then, Minhyuk said, “Are you telling me to open the doors to you and accept all of you with no rhyme or reason?”

“...!”

“...!”

[...!]

[...!]

The moment those words registered in their ears, everyone present felt as if a huge hammer had struck them in the head. The players that requested to join them varied in level, their levels ranging from Level 100~500. Of course, the players that were around Level 400~500 were only less than 1% of the total number of people here. Most of the players present here were either novice or mid-level players.

So, why did they come here to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom? Why did a large number of Level 100~300 players come here? If they allowed all of them to join, then Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would lose their worth. Obviously, they were the ones that came here on their own. If Beyond the Heavens Kingdom allowed everybody to join, then they would become a guild where no one would want to join.

“B, But shouldn’t you have told this to us in advance?!”

“In the first place, you shouldn’t have given us hope!!!”

The players around Level 100~300 still continued to complain about his words. That was right. If they were only going to accept rankers at around Level 400~500, then they should not have given them hope and allowed them to come here in the first place! Meanwhile, smiles appeared on the faces of the players at Level 400~500.

‘Right, our qualifications are sufficient.’

However, even among the players at Level 100~300, there would still be some people that were ahead of everyone and had the greatest potential to become rankers.

‘Your Majesty, you need to give them an answer.’

Cold sweat dripped down Haze’s back. The few words that Minhyuk would utter from now on would determine the fate of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. One wrong move and the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom might be destroyed from their attacks. If that happened, and they were able to fend off the attack, their kingdom would not be entertained and visited by foreigners in the future.

Then, Minhyuk said, “I also want to see you in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. I’m sure that’s what everyone wishes to do too. The people next to me are strong, I am strong. So, even if we are faced with tens of thousands of enemies, we will never falter and feel fear. I’m sure you want to become like that too.”

The notifications rang in Minhyuk’s ears.

[Brightest Sun]

[King’s Voice has been activated.]

[Your voice will sound more powerful and majestic to everyone hearing the King’s Voice.]

Then, he told everyone his key qualification requirement, “I’m sure everyone present knows about the Stars’ Path’s ‘Star Coin’.”

The Star Coin was a coin that appeared as part of the opening of the Stars’ Path. It was a gold coin shaped like a star and could be obtained as a special reward during hunts, for example: someone hunting a ‘boss monster’.

Boss monsters were not necessarily called boss monsters because they were high-levelled. They were called boss monsters because they were the strongest at the hunting ground’s level. As for the Star Coins, there was a small chance that they would drop when hunting a boss monster. However, one would be able to gain 25 platinum if they sold their Star Coin to the store. This was what made the event huge.

However, the most important part here was, players between Level 100~500 all had a chance of being able to get Star Coins in a fair manner. According to the system, they would prevent someone who was at Level 200 from getting a Star Coin upon the successful hunt of a Level 100 monster. Also, it was impossible for those doing a party hunt to obtain a Star Coin as a drop. In other words, only those that were stronger at the same level and had better control than their peers would be able to obtain a Star Coin.

“Only those that can collect Star Coins will be entertained among those that want to enter the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.”

Then, the notification rang for everyone present.

[The Kingdom Quest has started.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

All of the players present felt their heart throb. This was because anyone of them could have the chance to join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom as long as they were stronger than others on the same level as them. Even Level 100 players could join the kingdom as long as they were stronger than their peers. The same was true for those at Level 500. In other words, only 0.01% of them would have the qualifications to enter the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Who would complain about this?

“I have given everyone of you an equal opportunity.”

This was the truth. On top of that, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was also given room to breathe, to only accept hundreds out of the millions of people present here. If the 0.01% of the millions of Level 100 players that joined them grew, they would definitely become great rankers. If the 0.01% of the Level 500 players were recruited, then they would become the pillars of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

‘Your Majesty...!’

Haze trembled, goosebumps rising on her skin. And the same was true for everyone that wanted to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

‘I will be a part of that 0.01% and join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...!’

‘The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will be able to retain its name as the best nation.’

‘I will be one of the best!!!’

Minhyuk even threw in a great finishing line, “The future owner of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is you.”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Long live Beyond the Heavens Kingdom! Long live!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Let’s go! Let’s collect Star Coins!!!”

“Run!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Millions of cheering players rushed to the Stars' Path. After dealing with everything Minhyuk smiled softly. And Haze? She approached him and said, "That, that's amazing. Your Majesty...!"

"..."

But Minhyuk's smiling expression did not change.

"Your, Your Majesty...?"

"Fwaaaaaaa...!?Ha, Haze... I almost got in trouble, right?!"

"..."

Only then did Haze realize that Minhyuk had taken a risk and won this dangerous game of tug-of-war. As Minhyuk looked at the running players, he said, "Haze, can you see?"

Haze looked at them as he listened to Minhyuk's voice. They were the ones running forward to try and join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom! She felt her heart throb, a blazing flame alighting from within!

Aaaaaah! I'm so moved! Perhaps, His Majesty is also feeling the same way?

But the truth of the matter was different.

"Can't you see my bundles of cash running swiftly...?!"

"Eh?"

The words of Minhyuk destroyed the feelings that bubbled up in Haze's chest in an instant. The smile on Minhyuk's face was quite vicious when he turned to look back at Haze. He said, "Didn't I tell you that we will get something bigger than the material rewards? But we got them both. Both the material rewards and the people."

"...Ah!"

Haze finally understood the reason why Minhyuk asked them to pay two 'Star Coins' to gain the qualification to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Each Star Coin was worth 25 platinum, two of them would amount to 50 platinum. In other words...

'My god... they will actually pay 50 platinum just so they can join us?!'

That was right. Each person would pay 50 platinum. So, if 1,000 people joined, they would receive 50,000 platinum. Simply put, they would be able to quickly fill the losses that they had suffered during the duration of the Battle of the Thrones.

"And do you think they'll just bring coins from the Stars' Path? *Your Majesty, I got this in the Stars' Path, please try this. I hunted this, would you like to try some??* They'll definitely say that and bring me food, right? Wahahahahaha!!!"

"..."

Haze was someone that was aiming for the title of the Legendary Swindler. As for Minhyuk?

'The God of Swindling...?'

Without knowing the true purpose of their quests, the players ran swiftly with bright smiles on their faces.

“I will also have the chance to join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!”

“Let’s collect Star Coins! Let’s goooooo!!!”

“Long live the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!”

“...”

Ah. What a beautiful world.

Chapter 583: A True Comrade

There were once talks about how Koreans were good at gaming. These stories were told a long time ago and were proven to be true.

In the past, before the release of RPG Game 3, a game loved by many, the producers declared that even they did not know how long it would take for anyone to clear the game’s final boss. Because of the time difference, the Koreans were able to get to this game faster than the players from other countries. It was also one of the Koreans that cleared the game’s final boss, in two days no less.

Back then, everyone could imagine the expression plastered on the faces of the producers, it must have been like this: ?0?

They must have felt that it was impossible and ridiculous back then. Since then, the Koreans had broken many records.

Perhaps it was because of that, but just two hours after Minhyuk declared that their request to join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would be entertained only if they brought two Star Coins, a Korean had already come to visit him. After that, the next ones that came were still a Korean, then another Korean, and yet another Korean. People from the same country as Minhyuk came to visit him one after the other, requesting that they be allowed to join the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. It could be said that half of the members that requested to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom on the same day were Koreans.

[There are 411 players that have applied to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.]

Most of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s affairs were already systematic. They conducted a 1:1 interview with the people that wanted to join and collected their information just to be sure. Some might say that they were being too picky, but Athenae was a world that could very well become their asset and property. This meant that everyone that wanted to join them had to go through a strict and rigorous process.

Just like that, Beyond the Heavens Kingdom became stronger by getting both money and talent.

There were a lot of talks in public about the selection of the Battle of the Thrones’ MVP.

[The viewers’ votes account for 90%? Isn’t that crazy? If China or India decide to choose their own country, then they would become the MVP, right?]

[Aren't there plenty of loose ends in the Battle of the Thrones? Everyone can just choose their own country.]

[Joy Co. Ltd. needs to do a reflection on this matter. This is too lacking. Even I will be able to do it better if I'm the one that made it.]

[In fact, doesn't this look like Joy Co. Ltd. is just fucking with the Beyond the Heavens? Hahahahahaha!]

While people's opinions were divided, President Kang Taehoon posted on SNS ahead of the announcement of the MVP. Many of them were very thrilled to see what President Kang Taehoon had posted. The first part of his post explained the controversy over the Battle of the Thrones' MVP.

[Because this is the very first time that we held the Battle of the Thrones, I admit that we lack in many ways. I sincerely apologize for this...]

Toward the end though, President Kang Taehoon left a cryptic, yet meaningful, sentence.

[However, I'm sure everyone here knows who the real MVP is.]

The impact of his words were very huge. His words meant that even if that country did not become the MVP, the viewers would know the truth.

And an hour later, a world message hit the whole of Athenae.

[The MVP of the Battle of the Thrones has been selected.]

[The MVP was selected with 10% from the experts' votes and 90% from the viewers' votes.]

The notifications spread all over the world, making everyone pause in their tracks and stop what they were doing. Just when the people were wondering when they would announce it...

[The MVP country has received 22% approval rating from the experts and 37% approval rating from the viewers.]

All of the players sighed at the same time. They were cursing how the people of Joy Co. Ltd. were very adept at raising the tension. Then, another notification followed.

[The country with the second highest approval rating had received 10% approval rating from the experts and 14% approval rating from the viewers.]

The difference between the first and second country was very clear. Everyone was curious whether the results were really true. Then, letters started to appear in the skies for everyone to see.

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The entire world was left in shock. However, the following announcement left them reeling even more. The country with the second highest approval rating was none other than China. This meant that there was a huge difference between the approval rating of Korea and China. Simply put, there was only one thing that could make this much difference.

[The Chinese also voted for South Korea?]

[OMG...]

[Amazing... This is the Beyond the Heavens' class, they can even turn the hearts of the Chinese people over to their side...]

[But to be honest, there's no other country that has performed better than South Korea.]

[They're a godly country... in and of itself...]

At the same time, the people all over the world grew curious about the rewards that the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom would receive.

South Korea.

All of the Koreans that played Athenae cheered loudly.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Their cheers were as loud and as energetic as the cheers that they roared when Korea advanced to the semifinals in the 2002 World Cup. It was only natural since Korea was able to do an overwhelming turnaround during a time when the other countries ignored them.

“Long live the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!”

“Long live the Beyond the Heavens!!!”

“Three cheers for Our Lord, the Food God!!!”

There were even some that shouted three cheers. Then, the additional notifications began to ring along with their cheers.

[South Korea has been chosen as the MVP country in the Battle of the Thrones, as such a buff of 5% increase in EXP and drop rate would be given to everyone.]

[For the players that participated in the Battle of the Thrones, you will be given a buff of 10% increase in EXP and drop rate.]

[The MVP's rewards will be given to the Beyond the Heavens' King.]

Minhyuk was in the middle of interviewing the players that wanted to join Beyond the Heavens Kingdom when the notifications hit. Just like everyone, he ended up stopping in his tracks to look at the notifications. Then, the additional notifications rang in his ears.

[The MVP Shop has opened.]

[The MVP Shop will only be open for a week. The cash that can be used in the shop can only be acquired inside the 'Stars' Path'.]

[Click on the detailed explanation to find out more about how you can acquire the cash.]

[The restriction on the items in the shop will be lifted based on the amount of cash that you obtained.]

‘MVP Shop?’

Minhyuk was the Battle of the Thrones’ MVP. In Alexander’s case, he was able to receive an extremely OP reward in the form of a ‘God-rank artifact’ for being the one to sit on the Supreme King’s Throne. But the MVP Shop, the reward that the MVP had received, was completely different from that. It was a system that would only reward the MVP.

To understand more about the shop, Minhyuk quickly clicked on the detailed explanation.

[The MVP Shop is only opened to the king of the country that became the MVP in the Battle of the Thrones.]

[You can earn cash by gaining the ‘approval’ of your kingdom’s forces and showing them that you are their king. You can get cash through a dozen ways like ‘teaching’, ‘helping’ or ‘showing them new hunting methods’ inside the Stars’ Path.]

[You can also gain cash by going on a party hunt and hunting a boss monster. The cash that will be accumulated will also be dependent on the guild members or NPCs that accompany you in the Stars’ Path to a raid or in a boss hunt.]

[Acquiring cash is not limited to the players and NPCs of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. You can also gain cash from players from other countries and kingdoms as long as you gain their approval and admiration.]

Simply put, Minhyuk would be able to earn the MVP Shop’s cash as long as he showed his might and greatness as a king. On top of that...

‘Right now, almost every guild has led their guild members in a party hunt to explore the Stars’ Path.’

The Stars’ Path was far more difficult than what most imagined. That was why everyone was hunting in groups of ten, some even in the hundreds. Of course, a guild would be divided into several different groups. If one guild gathered all of their members in a single group, then they would number in the thousands.

‘There must be a lot of delicious food inside the MVP Shop, right? Hnghh...’

The thought alone made Minhyuk’s mouth water. As he continued to ponder, he realized, *‘If I lead the new guild members, then the effects will be greater. Right?’*

Athenae was an extremely high-quality virtual reality game that could measure a person’s brain waves and gauge someone’s current mood. So, if Minhyuk led the new guild members, and not the members of Beyond the Heavens that had always seen Minhyuk and what he always did, the effect would be maximized. Also...

‘I also have to show the newbies my might as a king.’

This was something that Minhyuk had already discussed with Haze. Many of their new guild members came from other countries. This meant that their situation was now completely different from before. They needed to make sure that these people were aware of the fact that, *‘Our king is really amazing!’* or something along those lines. Otherwise, these people would start looking for the Beyond the Heavens’ shortcomings and leave the kingdom.

However, Minhyuk was an upright king, as much as he was pragmatic.

‘I like to eat.’

Even if he had to go out with the new guild members, he wanted to receive and maximize the benefits that he would receive during the process. Minhyuk immediately opened the MVP Shop.

[Ochris’ Gloves. 1,000 cash.]

[Beynon’s Longsword. 2,000 cash.]

[Wicked Witch’s Wand. 4,000 cash.]

[Wild Ogre’s...]

[Slim Mermaid Scales’...]

“Two thousand?”

Even if the items were sealed, its details were not. Some of it could still be checked at this moment.

[This is an ingredient that can permanently raise one’s stats.]

“...!”

It seemed like it was a system where both Minhyuk and his retainers would be able to benefit. After all, not only could his subjects eat, he could also eat with them! However, the ingredient needed quite a lot of cash. One cost around 50,000 cash! But Minhyuk believed that this was enough for them to give it a try.

After making a decision, Minhyuk finally focused on the interview once again, “Why do you want to join Beyond the Heavens?”

“Because I want to be with you, Minhyuk. Hoho~”

The person that Minhyuk was interviewing was looking at him with sparkling eyes. To be exact, the person’s eyes were filled with love.

“...”

Minhyuk turned to look at the man’s resume briefly, *‘Lee Chun-Ja. Age, 75?years old.’*

“...”

Minhyuk was well and truly loved by everyone. Of course, Minhyuk was very grateful for that...

“P, pass...!”

Joy Co. Ltd.’s meeting room.

The executives, who were busy talking about server integration, suddenly changed topics.

“It seems like the one that received the MVP rewards, Player Minhyuk, is leading his new guild members in the Stars’ Path today.”

“Is that so? Quite interesting. Show it on the monitor.”

Team Leader Park Minggyu hurriedly pulled up the screen after hearing President Kang Taehoon’s words. On the screen, they could see around 1,000 people, composed of new guild members and Beyond the Heavens’ soldiers.

“Food God Minhyuk has created a force with his new guild members to go and hunt so he can accumulate the MVP Shop’s cash.”

“Is it the cash that can be accumulated via the guild members’ faith and belief in their king?”

Of course, the new members would show greater awe and admiration toward him compared to the members that had been with him for a long time.

“Yes. But I think that’s a ridiculous and foolish decision.”

“Ridiculous and foolish?”

The one that spoke up was the team leader of the Event Planning Team, Park Yi-Hyeon. Park Yi-Hyeon was appointed as the new team leader after the former team leader of the Event Management Team was promoted and sent overseas.

“The new guild members that Beyond the Heavens accepted are all players that are far stronger than other players at their level.”

“That’s right.”

“That’s why it would not be easy to surprise them and gain their faith and admiration.”

Park Yi-Hyeon’s words made enough sense. This was something that came out of the mouth of the person behind most of the content of the MVP reward and the Stars’ Path.

“Since we’re on this topic, can we assume that Player Minhyuk will be able to get a much better reward than the one sitting in the Supreme Throne if he does well in making use of his MVP reward?”

Accumulating cash would release the seals of the restricted slots. There was no end to how many Minhyuk could release. Since there was no end to the possibilities, the rewards could be said to be amazing. However, the system also had its drawbacks.

“It will be difficult. If he can do well, then it would be just like what the president said. But personally, I don’t think he will be able to release a lot of the restricted slots.”

At the same time, Minhyuk appeared on the TV screen, standing in front of his gathered troops.

Then, President Kang Taehoon asked, “Your reason?”

“It’s because it’s harder to accumulate cash than what you think. No matter how amazing he is, the people’s faith and the things that surprise them...”

But before Park Yi-Hyeon could even finish his sentence, the scene on the monitor changed. Minhyuk, riding on a white warhorse, appeared in front of the new guild members of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Everyone looked at him in anticipation. After all, this was the guild’s very first group hunt.

Minhyuk, who appeared in front of them, did not praise them, or even congratulate them. He just looked at each and every single one of them with a stern and commanding look. Minhyuk’s eyes were solemn, as if he was looking at his comrades going to war with him. As he looked at his guild members like that, Minhyuk, in a manner befitting a king, spoke loudly and briefly...

[Move out.]

Then, with his cape fluttering behind him, he turned around and took the lead. All of the new guild members' eyes were trained on his back. He just glanced at them and gave them a brief word, but his charisma was overflowing, leaving the new guild members in an uproar.

[Wow...]

[Did you see his eyes...?]

[Amazing.]

With those words, several notifications appeared on the monitor.

[Player Minhyuk has accumulated 59 cash.]

[Player Minhyuk has accumulated 31 cash.]

[Player Minhyuk has accumulated 21 cash.]

“...?”

Park Yi-Hyeon, who was just spitting about how it was hard to accumulate cash, shut his mouth and stopped talking.

“...”

“...”

Team Leader Park and President Kang looked at him silently for a while. After a short while, President Kang said, “It seems like the rewards that Player Minhyuk will get will be entirely up to him.”

Kang Taehoon looked at Minhyuk through the monitor with eyes filled with great anticipation and excitement.

Chapter 584: A True Comrade

Minhyuk, riding atop his white horse, silently took the lead as they entered the Stars’ Path.

As they continued to walk like that, Park, the centurion of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s legion, said, “Please listen to the instructions of the soldier right next to you. They will save you if you’re in danger.”

The new guild members all nodded at Park's words. However, none of them could hide the disappointment that flashed across their faces.

'So, Spear God Ben will not participate in this expedition?'

'How about Lesser Demon Elpis?'

'Ramyeon Boy Conir's not here too?'

Not a single one of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's prominent NPC was present. The disappointment that they felt was not to be underestimated when they realized this matter. Especially when Park spoke. A part of his words even rubbed them the wrong way.

'They will save you if you're in danger.'

The new guild members that were participating in this expedition were all players that were stronger than their peers on the same level. Many of them were well-versed in control and had been unrivaled in the game so far. How would people like them receive help from ordinary soldiers? And not even from Spear God Ben, Lesser Demon Elpis or even Great Pirate Gorfido? They could only snort arrogantly at Park's remarks. What was even funnier to them was the fact that the soldiers were all marching in a well-disciplined manner.

'Why are they being so upright?'

'This is the problem with NPCs.'

The soldiers were looking around vigilantly, their helmets pulled down and their hands gripping the hilt of their weapons tightly. It was as if they were going into a battlefield. In the end, the new guild members were players. Even if the air around them screamed for battle, they would eventually think that this was just a game.

"Hey, aren't you hot like that?"

"Why don't you take off your helmet?"

"Are you going to war, huh?"

"Please keep quiet."

"We're pioneering a new place, the place called the Stars' Path. Don't let your guard down."

The soldiers maintained their discipline and spoke succinctly and bluntly. The difference between the players and the soldiers was like when the reserve and active forces came together.

Minhyuk turned his head toward them when he heard the commotion. Seeing his gaze pass by them made the new guild members flinch. Then, Minhyuk spoke in his dignified voice, "Heed my orders. The troops of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom will not participate in the hunt to gauge the skills of our new members, wait for my orders again before you move."

"Sir, yes, sir!"

"Sir, yes, sir!"

“Sir, yes, sir!”

The soldiers saluted after hearing Minhyuk’s orders. Minhyuk judged that he did not need to dig deeper and delve into the conflicts between the players and the NPCs, ‘*To see is to believe.*’ Just like that, Minhyuk and his troops entered the Stars’ Path.

[You have entered the Stars’ Path.]

[A 2x EXP acquisition rate and item drop rate will be applied inside the Stars’ Path.]

The Stars’ Path was as big as several Athenae continents combined. Because of that, there were several hunting grounds and dungeons located inside it. And just like every new place, people from all over the world had already started to find hunting grounds and dungeons all on their own. These hunting grounds and dungeons were open to everyone, but it had to be known that each level had appropriate hunting grounds for them.

The people that joined the expedition this time were quite high-leveled. So, they went deeper into the Stars’ Path, until the ‘Wolves’ Sacred Land’ appeared in front of them. Werewolves were monsters that could be seen in almost any hunting grounds. However, these monsters in the Stars’ Path were different. It was a place with a ‘scenario’. Most of the monsters that existed inside the Stars’ Path were related to the ‘Six Monster Gods’.

So, what were the Six Monster Gods?

Athenae, the God of Origin, bore several gods and monsters. Back then, these gods and monsters were equal in position. However, as time went by, the gods drove the monsters that Athenae bore down to earth. After being driven out, they eventually settled down on the Stars’ Path. In other words, these monsters could be said to be Monster Gods. And there were six of them in the Stars’ Path.

One of them was the Wolf King Loraudi, and the werewolves here were all descendants of him. Their aspects were on a different level from typical werewolves.

It was definitely still in the middle of the day but the moment they entered the Wolves’ Sacred Land, a darkness that enveloped everything fell upon them. This hunting ground, which was a dark forest, was rarely visited by players because the monsters in here were different from typical monsters. The monsters in this hunting ground usually appeared in groups. This hunting ground was also divided into several areas and the deeper one went, the more dangerous it became.

“Awoooooooooooooo!”

“Awoooooooooooooo!”

They finally appeared.

‘The black werewolves, the weakest among the monsters in the Wolves’ Holy Land, appear at the entrance of the hunting ground.’

‘Unlike ordinary werewolves, they are extremely fast and even a single scratch from their claws can be fatal.’

The werewolves' glowing eyes stared at them from the darkness of the forest. There were a total of 500 new guild members and 500 Beyond the Heavens' soldiers. The level of the soldiers and the new guild members were roughly the same.

"Did you guys hear His Majesty's words? Just sit back and watch."

"Don't even try to cut us off and stay in the frontlines, NPC soldiers."

However, the new guild members knew that they were stronger than others at the same level as them. Their arrogance knew no bounds.

Then, Minhyuk said, "I have a very important job to do so I will leave the hunting to you. Do you have any objections?"

"No, sir!"

"We'll be fine!"

The soldiers answered briefly. However, the new guild members were very disappointed.

'What? I thought I would be able to see the Food God in action in front of me?'

'Why?'

'Why is he not coming to the frontlines?'

Just as these questions flashed in their heads, the sword in Minhyuk's hand was wrapped in a bright light. Everyone turned to look at it, their eyes sparkling. But the shape that appeared in front of them was none other than a 'hoe'.

"...???"

"...???"

"...???"

Then, Minhyuk began to collect root crops and wild vegetables on the ground not too far away from them. This was the first time that they had seen a king squatting on the ground and digging for crops!!!

"...???"

"...???"

"...???"

The new guild members were dumbfounded and somewhat disappointed. Then, hundreds of werewolves began to show themselves throughout the forest.

"Better hide behind me, soldier."

"Just watch how we perform."

"Grrrrrrrrrrrr!"

“Grrrrrrrrrrrr!”

Not long after, the hundreds of werewolves leapt out from the cover of the trees and sped toward the guild members. They were extremely fast. If the players that were facing them only had ordinary senses, they would have already been hit by a fatal strike. But...

Baaaaaaaaaang—

With their amazing reflexes, one of the players slammed one of the leaping werewolves to the ground. As if it was a signal, the new guild members began to step forward.

Slash, slash, slash!

Crack, crack, crack!

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

Their swords were swift, their axes were tough, and their arrows were accurate. It was obvious that they were a league above their peers. Just like how there were Rankers Above Rankers, there were players above players. These people had amazing control, that they could even deal with at least two players of the same level as them.

Of course, the new guild members were not without damage either. Even so, it was small enough for them to continue the hunt. The number of werewolves present was so high that the same number of players who were on the same level as them would have already been wiped out at this point.

“Grrrrrrroaaaar!”

The werewolves kept on being cut down. As beads of sweat covered their foreheads, the new guild members looked around proudly and arrogantly.

“Did you see that, soldier? This is who we are.”

“Have soldiers like you ever seen anything like this?”

Their arrogance knew no bounds. Perhaps dealing with hundreds of black werewolves without much effort was truly worthy of praise. So, after finishing their first hunt, they continued to delve deeper into the area.

And Minhyuk...?

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

[You have gained 1 DEX.]

[You have acquired the Sacred Land's Mushroom.]

‘Yeah! I got mushrooms!!!’

...he was working hard to eat happily once again today. Crouching down and harvesting new crops in the Stars' Path was fun and interesting.

Then, Park approached Minhyuk and reported, “The fifth hunt is over. They are showing amazing skills, just as expected.”

After hearing the report, Minhyuk paused what he was doing and turned to look at Park, “Is that so? Who has the best performance?”

“The man named Orleed. He’s the one that cut down the most werewolves. He could easily cut down three by himself.”

Minhyuk just nodded before saying to Park, “It seems like the new guild members are getting more and more arrogant and ignoring our soldiers.”

Minhyuk glanced briefly at the new guild members before turning back to digging his crops once again.

“Are we just going to leave them alone?”

“...Well, isn’t it better for them to see it for themselves?” Minhyuk said, smiling bitterly. Park just looked at him with eyes filled with trust before bowing his head and turning around.

In just one glance, Minhyuk saw how the new guild members were giggling about and mocking the soldiers.

‘Arrogance brings about aggressiveness.’

Thud—

Thud—

Minhyuk chuckled as he continued to dig for his crops.

The eighth hunt ended just like that. As time went by, the new guild members grew increasingly disappointed with Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

‘What the hell? There are no outstanding orders, no outstanding NPCs, nor any fancy swordsmanship from the Food God?’

‘Does the Food God not have anything to teach us?’

Their arrogance, after continuously winning battle after battle without suffering any casualties, had already reached the skies. Among them was Orleed. He was the one that cut the most werewolves and was the one leading the new guild members. Park and the other soldiers were just silently watching them and not even going to the frontlines at all.

Orleed, who was taking the lead, thought, *‘The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom... their assessment, the worst.’*

Orleed was actually a spy. The person that he truly served was Richard, the one that had the class ‘Monarch’ and would be the second king to be crowned. Richard was an unofficial ranker that was gaining power at the same time as the server integration. It would not be too long before he could establish a kingdom of his own. Richard was someone that had received the Monarch class and would become an amazing class.

But what about the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom?

‘Trash.’

This was what Orleed thought. The NPCs that were said to be outstanding? Except for the Named NPCs, Orleed did not know about the others. As for the Food God being a smart and genuine king? All he did was look at them while digging the ground. As to why he would just sit back and watch them?

‘He probably doesn’t have the confidence to order us around with our skills.’

Would his military command be better than Richard? Probably not. Richard was a former colonel in the American army. The army that he had built was disciplined, systematic and powerful to the point that they could rival the empires’ armies. His army was obviously on an entirely different level from the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s troops that only knew how to quarrel at most.

After ending his thoughts there, Orleed thought that he should just enjoy the process and use this as a content for his report.

“Orleed, don’t you think things are a bit too boring now?”

“Yes, that’s what I was thinking too.”

“Yeah. With all of us here, I think it’s possible for us to increase the level of difficulty and raise our EXP at a faster rate. Besides, the king over there is not even interested in us.”

“Yeah.”

“The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is disappointing. It’s completely different from what I thought.”

“Well, let’s just continue to hunt. Even the centurion over there told us that everything would be up to us.”

The new guild members immediately decided to aggro more werewolves and hunt them together. They even decided to send forward a scouting party to lure the werewolves their way.

But just five minutes later...

“Shit...”

“We’re f*cked.”

“...???”

Orleed and the hundreds of new guild members looked confused when they saw the scouting party rushing toward them from afar. Not long after, Orleed’s face turned ugly.

“Silver werewolves...?”

Silver werewolves were only one level stronger than black werewolves. However, the issue for the new members was that the number that appeared in front of them was easily three times more than the number that they hunted before.

‘From what I heard, nothing has been known about the silver werewolves yet. No one knew if they came out in packs or not...’

Today was the day that they knew that silver werewolves came in a pack of a thousand. Some of them were leaping from one tree to another, some were running on the ground, while some were jumping high up in the skies. Nearly 1,500 of the silver werewolves were swiftly running toward the new guild members.

‘We’re in danger...!’

Orleed could already predict the difficult and dangerous situation that was waiting for them. However, unlike their worried voices, none of the new guild members sported looks of concern.

‘We have the Food God!’

‘The Food God will save us!’

That was right. The Food God was at a much higher level than the new guild members. He even had an amazing skill that could sweep away a lot of enemies in one go.

Orleed saw Minhyuk receive the report from one of the soldiers. Minhyuk glanced at the charging pack of werewolves and gave his order to Park, “Soldiers, stand by.” Then, he returned to his digging.

“...!”

Orleed was shocked.

*‘Is he f*cking crazy?! Is he going to allow all of his new guild members to die?!?’*

Orleed had never seen a more foolish king than him.

“F*cking bastard!!! That king has no intention of helping us!!! Prepare for battle!”

The new guild members were all shocked after hearing Orleed’s cry. Then, they met the onslaught of more than a thousand silver werewolves.

“Keuhooooook!”

Those that clashed first had no choice but to scream.

‘They are 1.5x stronger than the black werewolves?!!’

All of them were appalled by this discovery.

“Keuaaaaack!”

Scratches appeared on their bodies as their enemies' swift feet and sharp claws slashed at them.

“Grrrrrrrrrrr!”

The silver wolves leapt and opened their jaws to sink their sharp teeth into the necks of the new guild members. Meanwhile, the soldiers, who were left on standby, stood perfectly still as they waited for their orders.

“Aaaaaaack!”

“Urrghhhhh!”

It was just a split second, but in that instant, the entire battlefield was turned into a mess. The new guild members were starting to get pushed back. These people, who thought that they were above these werewolves, began to fall one after the other.

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

Even Orleed had allowed several of the silver werewolves to attack his body. Just when he was about to be bitten on the neck.

Slaash—

Orleed pulled the dagger on his waist and stabbed the werewolf on the neck before quickly stepping back.

‘We won’t be able to last for ten minutes. They’re too strong. We will all be wiped out.’

There were no casualties yet. But it was only a matter of time. Amidst their screams and falls, Minhyuk, who was digging the ground, rose from his position.

*‘Right, if it’s that f*cking king then...’*

If that king made a move, then all of these monsters would be wiped out at once. All of the new guild members recognized this fact and expected Minhyuk to make a move.

‘Finally, the Beyond the Heavens’ King will make his move!!!’

However, contrary to their expectations, Minhyuk approached his troops and said, “Soldiers, prepare for battle.”

Swoosh—

Swoosh—

Swoosh—

Swoosh—

Swoosh—

The soldiers, who were on standby, all stood up in perfect attention. All of them were ready to battle.

Orleed’s face turned ugly when he saw this scene, *‘What can you even do with those f*cking stupid soldiers?!’*

There were only 500 soldiers. Nothing would change even if they joined the battle, especially since they could not do anything at all before. At that moment, Orleed saw the sharp glint of a werewolf’s teeth flashing in front of him, ready to sink into his neck.

‘I’ll die...’

Just when the thought flashed in Orleed’s head, Minhyuk finally uttered his order. Just like the usual, he said, “Wipe them out.”

Then...

Fwoosh—

The werewolf fell down on the ground, dead with an arrow piercing through its neck.

‘The shot is neat and precise.’

There was not even a millimeter of deviation. The arrow pierced through the werewolf’s airway and instantly brought it to its death. When Orleed turned to look at the direction of the arrow, he saw Centurion Park. And along with that...

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh—

All five hundred soldiers took out their bows and arrows and began to shoot at the same time, creating a shocking, yet spectacular, scene. All of their arrows pierced through vital points, the neck or the forehead, and brought death to the werewolves closing in on the new guild members.

“...An archer unit?!”

That was what Orleed thought. But, that was wrong. Minhyuk looked at Orleed and thought, *‘Our Beyond the Heavens’ soldiers are actually the worst at archery.’*

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s soldiers had trained and mastered the way of the sword, the axe, the spear, the bow, and even the shield.

Chapter 585: A True Comrade

For Orleed, the standard of a true and genuine king was Monarch Richard. He was someone with excellent foresight and a high ability to develop his military forces. In fact, the army that Richard had built was stronger than any other kingdom’s army. If Richard had an archer unit, perhaps they would be as powerful as the Beyond the Heaven’s forces.

Orleed thought, *‘So you weren’t entirely stupid. It seems like you intended to help us from the rear using the soldiers of your archer unit.’*

That was right. If the troops were made up of outstanding archers, then their odds would increase. However, the new guild members were still a mess.

“Euaaaaaaack!”

“Aaaaaaaaack!”

“Someone, someone please help me!”

Amidst their screams, Orleed shouted, “The soldiers are all specialized in archery! With their support from the rear, we will be able to pull ourselves together!!!”

Hope was reignited on the faces of the new guild members.

‘An archer unit?’

‘Ah, come to think of it, their arrows were completely accurate!’

‘Their accuracy must be very high!’

That was what they thought. Not much was known about the Beyond the Heavens' soldiers since they were not that famous. For most kingdoms, whether they were run by a player or an NPC, there were generally outstanding units among their army. And from what it looked like, the Beyond the Heavens had secretly raised an archer unit.

However, this line of thinking was wrong.

As if on cue, all of the soldiers of Beyond the Heavens slung their bows on their backs. Then, Centurion Park drew the sword on his waist and said, "Draw your swords!!!"

Fwoosh!

Fwoosh!

Fwoosh!

Fwoosh!

The soldiers all drew their swords and jumped into the fray. At the same time, Orleed witnessed how Centurion Park jumped in the middle of the battle and cut down three silver werewolves at once.

'Heooooook!'

Orleed was shocked. However, a startling scene was unfolding in front of him. The Beyond the Heavens' soldiers skillfully moved around the battlefield, cutting down their enemies and rescuing the new guild members that were facing a crisis. Their sword strikes were precise, none of their movements wasted. Their spears accurately pierced through their enemies' vital points. Even their axes easily split their enemies heads in one go.

The soldier named Hans, who they had ignored before, reached his hand out to one of the fallen new guild members and asked, "Are you alright?"

"..."

The new guild members were all ashamed. They knew that they were better than the average players which boosted their ego and made them ignore these soldiers. But when they were facing a crisis, the one that held their hand out to help them were the very same people that they had ignored.

The new guild member held Hans' hand tightly as he stood up. However, he could not bring himself to look up from the shame that he was feeling. At the same time, he was in awe.

'They are strong but they are not arrogant!'

But the most surprising part here was...

'How were they able to nurture and raise soldiers like that?'

Everyone was shocked. Even if they were already part of the guild, they still had no way to check the actual skills or power of the kingdom's soldiers. That was a feat that was only possible for executives. The only thing that they could check was the soldiers' level. The new guild member was sure that Hans was only at the same level as him. But the truth was Hans' level was lower than the guild member's level.

As the new guild members were left reeling in shock, a series of notifications began to ring in Minhyuk's ears.

[You have earned 101 cash.]

[You have earned 109 cash.]

[You have earned 67 cash.]

[...earned 51 cash.]

[You have accumulated a total of 18,144 cash.]

Who was the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's commander-in-chief? It was none other than Brod, who turned out to be the Absolute God's Sword. Brod, together with Elpis and the Sword Saint of the past, Conir, taught these soldiers their swordsmanship. Then, who taught them archery? The man that taught them to shoot their arrows was Korea's own Master Archer, Root. And that was not all. Their spearmanship was also personally taught by none other than 'Spear God' Ben himself.

The combination of the best instructors and the best soldiers would result in the strongest army. Minhyuk was very confident that the Beyond the Heavens' soldiers would not lose out against any of the empire's army in the world on the same level as them.

'Except for one place. The Luvien Empire.'

Minhyuk could not gauge how they would fare against them, since there was no information available about the forces of the Luvien Empire.

And now, things went in the direction that Minhyuk wanted. The new guild members finally abandoned their arrogant thinking and began to respect the soldiers and fight alongside them.

"That's dangerous!!!"

Some threw themselves in front of the soldiers that were met with danger. Some even helped the soldiers that were in danger of getting bitten on the neck by the werewolves. Minhyuk watched them with a small smile on his face. Surprisingly enough, they were able to kill all 1,500 silver werewolves, with only two casualties among the new guild members.

[Your retainers have gained an amazing achievement by completely destroying the enemies.]

[You have earned 5,000 cash.]

Minhyuk was able to gain 20,000 cash in one go. But then, Orleed, who was being supported by Centurion Park, burst out in anger. He approached Minhyuk and shouted, "What kind of king are you! Why did you just keep on watching us?! You should have helped us when you saw that we were in danger!"

"That's right!!!"

"I'm so disappointed in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!!!"

Some other new guild members immediately joined in the tirade, with veins protruding from their necks, after Orleed protested. From their perspective, it was unfair that they had to struggle like that when Food God Minhyuk could just swing his sword a few times and kill the werewolves in one go.

“Your Majesty, what...!” Park shouted when he saw Minhyuk raise his hand to let the soldiers stand back and stop restraining the new guild members.

Minhyuk looked at the new guild members, his eyes sporting a sharp glare and his expression vicious, as he said, “What kind of bullshit are you all spouting, huh?”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The faces of the new guild members turned ugly when they heard his words. He was the king but he did not mean to help them? Minhyuk continued, “You have never trusted this king, let alone my men, yet you’re all spouting nonsense like this?”

Everyone turned silent at Minhyuk’s words. Minhyuk held his breath for a moment to maintain the coldness in his voice. Then, his voice turned a tad bit rougher as he said, “You wanted this king to save you when you never even placed an ounce of trust in me and my men? Did you think that I would not see you laughing at my men as you looked down at them?!!!”

Shame colored the new guild members’ faces when they heard Minhyuk’s words. There was no denying it. It was them that turned a blind eye to the comrades that were with them, the very same comrades that would fight together with them, just because they thought they were a bit better than them.

“Do you know how my soldiers got stronger? They grew stronger because they rely on each other, help each other, and trust each other.”

“...”

They all remained silent as they listened to how Minhyuk admonished them, “Fortunately, you’re all able to realize this fact early on.”

The new guild members turned to look at each other. The look in their eyes had changed as they looked at the soldiers that they had ignored before. Some of them supported a wounded soldier while some were looking at them in worry. Although this was just a game, they finally realized that this was what camaraderie was. In that short amount of time...

‘The Food God wanted to make us realize this fact...’

‘So the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was able to become such a strong nation because of?camaraderie?’

‘I will also have comrades that will run to my aid and protect me. What a wonderful thing...’

And Minhyuk? His eyes, which were filled with grace, nobility and greatness, looked at each and every single one of them as he said, “This is the ‘Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’, the place where you are a part of.”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“...”

The moment they heard that, goosebumps rose on their backs. Even though this was just a game to them, this kingdom would be able to make them feel like they were truly living here, and feel true, genuine camaraderie. This was the place where only the strong live! And this is the place where they were now a part of. The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom!

Orleed, who watched everything unfold, could not close his mouth after seeing how handsome and cool Minhyuk was. Suddenly, a crack resounded in his ears.

Crack, crack, crack!

That was the sound of a new king appearing in Orleed's heart, someone who had only known and recognized Richard as his king. And the name of that king was none other than 'Minhyuk'.

Event Planning Team.

Park Yi-Hyeon, the newly appointed event planning team leader, was the one that planned all of the events in the Stars' Path. Right now, he was appalled to see the notifications that appeared on the screen of his monitor.

'That's, that's impossible!'

Just like what he said in the meeting room, Park Yi-Hyeon was very confident that gaining MVP cash was a very difficult feat. After all, he was the one that planned the event. But now, Player Minhyuk had acquired more than 20,000 cash in one go.

'It's, it's just mere luck. That's impossible...'

Yi-Hyeon shook his head. But then, he suddenly remembered the conversation that he had with Team Leader Park Minggyu before he left the meeting room.

'Team Leader Park Yi-Hyeon, you're still new so you might not know this yet but the players in Athenae cannot be determined through mere calculations.'

Park Yi-Hyeon was a realist through and through. That was why he denied the words that Park Minggyu told him.

'Right, it's just a coincidence. This is the only time.'

But Yi-Hyeon suddenly felt uneasy.

'But if he can truly earn 200,000 cash then...'

Just the thought alone was enough to make Yi-Hyeon dizzy. He closed his eyes and mumbled unknowingly, "He will be able to receive a far better reward than the god-rank artifact that Alexander received.

Additional notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears after he told the new guild members that this was the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, the place where they would be a part of.

[The confidence and trust of the new guild members in the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom have increased significantly.]

[You have won all of the hearts of your new guild members in a short amount of time.]

[You have earned 5,000 cash.]

Minhyuk earned additional cash.

'I need to put in some more effort to earn more cash.'

Of course, everything that happened earlier was also a ploy to get more cash. However, Minhyuk did not help them earlier because he truly wanted the new guild members to realize some things.

And the way that Minhyuk chose to gain cash?

Well, there were actually many ways to earn cash. One was like before, where his men had to take care of a difficult opponent. Or when the people present here showed admiration toward him as a king. He could also earn cash if he showed his majesty and dignity as a king. There were many ways. In fact, there were methods that would only be revealed during an appropriate moment.

But what was the easiest way among all of these methods?

Minhyuk stood in front of Orleed, the new guild member that had been most active in all the battles so far, and said, "Orleed, I will give you a reward for getting the highest contribution."

A commotion broke out among the new guild members after hearing Minhyuk's words. What kind of reward was it?

"I'll cook a dish for you. If there's something you want to eat, then do tell me."

Orleed was a spy sent by Richard, the one that would become the newly crowned king. So, why was he feeling excited when he heard that Minhyuk would cook for him?

'I still haven't rid myself of the lingering emotions from earlier. But the only liege that I will serve is you, Your Majesty, Richard!!!'

Orleed once again made a vow silently, as if he wanted to show off his firm will. The only person that he would serve was Richard, and Richard alone!!!

"What dish would you like to taste?"

"I have always been curious about the taste of Korea's braised spicy chicken."

Orleed was American. His friends had always told him that he should try a taste of the braised spicy chicken if he ever went to visit Korea! Minhyuk smiled kindly at him as he started cooking.

"Wow..."

"He's a king but he's going to cook for guild members like us?"

During the process, Minhyuk was able to gain the admiration of his new guild members. After all, Minhyuk was a very important and valuable figure but here he was, cooking for his guild members.

[You have earned 131 cash.]

[You have earned 111 cash.]

[...earned 104 cash.]

Of course, the cash notifications rang accordingly.

When the braised spicy chicken was finished, Orleed thought, *‘The Food God’s dishes are amazing but the only person that I will serve is you, Your Majesty Richard!!!’*

He kept on chanting his own promise as if he was showing that his will would never break nor falter. Then, he took a bite of the braised spicy chicken.

Richard was the one that would soon be crowned as the new king. He had been working actively as an unofficial player so far, but there were quite a lot of people that knew him. He also had a lot of rankers by his side. There were also rumors that his forces were on par with the forces of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. This was a fact. No, perhaps they were well on their way to becoming the better kingdom.

Richard finally reached the end of his quest. The red crown that the Absolute Monarch, the same monarch that plunged the continents into despair, slowly landed on Richard’s head. Then, a world message rang in everyone’s ears.

[You will become a king that can fight against the Battle God!]

[Your legendary class: Monarch has changed to a god class!]

[The second Absolute God Class has appeared in the world!]

[Your class name is ‘Absolute Monarch’!]

[All of your skills and stats will change accordingly!]

Richard felt a thrill run down his spine after knowing that he was the second Absolute God Class to appear in the world. All of this was because he became the Absolute Monarch.

‘Everything is going smoothly.’

Richard smirked. At that moment, he remembered Orleed. Orleed did not have much time to play games so his level was not that high. However, he had been Richard’s comrade in Athenae for a very long time. Orleed willingly became a spy and entered the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom for him. With his help, Richard would be able to dig up Beyond the Heavens’ weaknesses, break them apart and make a splendid debut.

So, he sent a whisper to Orleed, believing that the man would be very pleased that he contacted him.

[The other party has blocked you.]

“...???”

Richard tried again, wondering if there was an error in the system.

[The other party has blocked you.]

[The other party has blocked you.]

[...has blocked you.]

“...???”

Rumor had it that the block was never lifted since that day.

Chapter 586: A True Comrade

Orleed lifted a piece of the glistening red chicken leg to his mouth and took a huge bite out of it. The chewy texture of the meat, as well as the harmonious sweet, spicy flavor wrapped around his tongue the moment he took a bite.

‘It’s, it’s spicy... but it’s delicious...’

For Orleed, a dish like braised spicy chicken was truly on the spicy side. However, it tasted so divine that he could not stop himself from eating.

All of the new guild members stared at Orleed. Their king, Minhyuk, used his ‘Joy of Eating Together’ skill and ate a plate of braised spicy chicken by himself while sitting in front of Orleed. However, the new guild members were all focused on Orleed.

“How does it taste?”

“Is, is it spicy?”

“Just say something Orleed. Please.”

But Orleed did not answer them. He had lost his voice in front of the braised spicy chicken. All he did was look at Minhyuk, who was sitting in front of him, and follow what he was doing. Orleed scooped a mouthful of warm white rice and thought, *‘Korean-grown rice is more glossy and more flavorful than any other rice.’*

Orleed continued to copy what Minhyuk did, getting some of the well-seasoned potatoes and sprinkling some of the braised spicy chicken’s red sauce on it, then mashing it well before adding it to his rice and placing everything in his mouth.

“...”

Orleed felt like tears were about to flow out of his eyes.

‘So, Korean food is this delicious?’

However, Orleed shook his head not long after. He thought that it must be delicious because His Majesty personally made it for him.

‘I think I will be able to live happily for the rest of my life after eating something delicious like this just once.’

What could bring happiness in one’s life? Wasn’t it eating delicious food like this? Would there be something else that would make him happy and delighted like this? Orleed scraped up the rest of the braised spicy chicken with a huge smile on his face. Then...

[You ate a dish from a recipe specially made for you.]

[You won't be able to eat another dish from a recipe specially made for you for a month.]

[You can't receive any duplicate buffs during the duration of the buff retention period.]

[Braised Spicy Chicken.]

[All of your stats will increase by 17%, your Affor Swordsmanship's skill level will increase by +1 for 22 days.]

[You will have an additional 22% increase in your EXP acquisition rate for 22 days.]

“...”

Orleed was left speechless. Truth was, he also thought that Food God Minhyuk's dishes were over exaggerated by the people that tasted it. After all, how could someone become 1.3x stronger just by eating something? Based on common sense, that was something that was completely impossible. If it was really that much, then a player with a normal rank artifact would be able to exert the same power as a player with a legendary rank artifact.

‘It's actually true?’

Orleed thought that it was crazy. It was jaw-droppingly OP. The food not only tasted delicious, it also had excellent buff effects. Then, Orleed saw Minhyuk, with a soft smile on his face after finishing his own dish. For some reason, he thought he saw a halo shining brightly behind the man.

As for why Orleed thought that buffed dishes were overpowered? A single dish like this could give anyone an opportunity to hunt opponents that they could not originally hunt on their own.

‘With this, it will be possible for a Level 300 player to hunt a Level 330 boss monster all by themselves.’

For players, hunting monsters that were lower in level than them would give them lower EXP. As for monsters with a higher level than them? Of course it would give them tremendous EXP and high rewards. But what if they were able to eat Minhyuk's dishes?

‘I will be able to hunt boss monsters that I couldn't reach before. This is far more surprising than getting a better artifact.’

After all, artifacts were limited by the players' slots. Earrings, necklaces, gloves, boots, armor, helmets and even weapons. If these were excluded, then the only way a player could strengthen themselves was through their stats. And one of the ways for them to raise their stats tremendously was...

‘The Food God's dishes.’

Minhyuk approached Orleed and said, “I hope you'll continue to work hard, Orleed.”

“...!”

It shocked Orleed, “You, you know my name?”

He was surprised because he knew that a king was the monarch of thousands, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of people. That was why in most cases, people like them would not remember or even know the names of their subjects. This was the case with Richard. Richard did

not know the names of his men except for his key executives and the people that had been with him for the longest time possible. And in Athenae, it was impossible for someone to confirm their nickname because it did not appear above the players' heads.

In response to Orleed's question, Minhyuk answered casually, "Of course. It's not just you. That friend over there is called William, he specializes in the bow. That one over there is Rolles, he's good with the spear. Over there is..."

Minhyuk named the new guild members one after the other. That was when Orleed realized that Minhyuk took the time to memorize their names before they went on this expedition. It might seem small but it was a form of consideration for them. A way to show that he cared for them.

'A king like him is going to such an extent like this...'

Orleed was both in awe and admiration of Minhyuk.

'This is... the king that I should truly serve...'

Orleed knew that he would not be afraid of anything if he was with a king like Minhyuk.

"Thank you, Your Majesty."

"...Alright," Minhyuk answered, thinking that Orleed was thankful because he cooked for him.

However, it was for a completely different matter. Orleed thanked him for becoming his 'new king'. He had sneaked into the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom as a spy but he found a new king to serve wholeheartedly.

[Would you like to block Richard?]

'Yes.'

[You have blocked Richard.]

Orleed looked at Minhyuk as he climbed on top of his white horse.

'My loyalty will remain with you forever.'

At the same time, a notification rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[You have gained Orleed's loyalty.]

[You have earned 2,000 cash.]

Time attack dungeons were dungeons that could be repeatedly challenged and broken through. It was a dungeon where one had to clear it either in a set time, or a shorter time and break a record. Time attack dungeons had appeared as events in Athenae for a long time now. The way they held the event was simple, the one that cleared the dungeon the fastest would be the event's winner.

Back when the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom was still Legend Guild, they were able to gain fame with Minhyuk's help by beating America in a time attack dungeon. And now, time attack dungeons, a challenge loved by many, had appeared one after the other in the Stars' Path.

Time attack dungeons were dungeons that fit the level of the players. It also had a system where players of all levels could compete equally. Because of that players at around Level 50~100, Level 100, Level 200, Level 300 could participate. As for those at Level 400~500, there were many events and contents that they could participate in so they were excluded in the time attack dungeons this time.

And now, the name Maserrati was dominating all of the time attack dungeons in the Stars' Path.

Of course, the level of the time attack dungeons were varying, which made it more surprising. On top of that, those that participated in the Stars' Path's time attack dungeons and failed would not be allowed to participate again. Because of that, the consequences of their actions became greater, which made the entire world focus more on this matter.

[What kind of guild is the Maserrati Guild?]

[Wow... They broke the records of America and Japan in the time attack dungeons and took control of all of them.]

[The American and Japanese players are struggling to regain first place but they can't do anything because the record is too out of this world.]

[The name 'Maserrati Guild' has been placed on almost 40% of all the time attack dungeons in the Stars' Path.]

[Are they a new powerhouse?]

[Maserrati. From what I heard the one leading the guild is Richard, the person that recently obtained the Absolute God class.]

[That's right. It's the guild led by Richard. It's well-known among my peers.]

Anyone, as long as they were not stupid, would know who Richard was. He was the person that changed his class into the Absolute Monarch, the Absolute God class. They could also tell his intentions through this. He was informing the world that he and his guild would start engaging in full-fledged external activities. This act would also increase the attention and curiosity of people toward Maserrati Guild, and would allow them to increase their guild's size tremendously.

At the same time...

"Actually, Richard already has enough military forces and a large enough territory to build a kingdom of his own and ascend to the throne. However, he's saving the opportunity to make a splendid debut. If he can make a jaw-dropping debut, then he will be able to attract more talents," Orleed reported to Minhyuk.

Orleed had immediately changed sides and supported Minhyuk. Minhyuk was not too surprised to know that Orleed was a spy. This was because he was already assuming that someone had planted a spy in their midst.

‘Even if we get their personal information, those that want to hide what they want to hide will still be able to conceal things from us.’

However, this also gave them a cause, a justification of sorts.

Since the Beyond the Heavens was the kingdom that was built the fastest, countless people were targeting them. Besides, if they were able to devour Beyond the Heavens, then they would be able to gain greater wealth and honor. But the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom did not have any cause and justification to attack them first.

If they did that without any cause, the entire world would say, *‘The Beyond the Heavens is no different from a PK guild.’*

It was truly a strange thing. The one that challenged them would not be criticized but if Beyond the Heavens, a kingdom that had already climbed at a higher place, tried to deal with their enemies, the people would point fingers at them and tell them that they were just slaughtering innocents.

But now, Beyond the Heavens was given a very good reason. The enemy had planted a spy in their country. This single justification was more than enough.

“What kind of person is Richard?”

“...I don’t dare to say anything recklessly. The one that climbed and became the Absolute Monarch. That’s who Richard is.”

“...”

Minhyuk groaned lightly. Another Absolute God class had appeared in the world. Minhyuk had personally experienced the power of an Absolute God class in the form of Lu Bai, the ‘Savior’. Lu Bai had shown tremendous power that no ordinary player could keep up with. In fact, the scene where Lu Bai used his ‘Judgment’ skill and melted nearly 40,000 of the members of a PK guild in an instant was still fresh and vivid in Minhyuk’s mind.

“Richard’s class was originally Swordsman, and not Monarch.”

“He was a Swordsman?”

“Yes. He originally had the Swordsman class. However, he had an amazing talent for attracting people to his side. He used this talent to gather and create a strong army and started taking control of a territory. Because of that, he was able to gain the ‘Monarch’ class as his sub-class. It has now changed into the Absolute Monarch, an Absolute God class.”

“How was Richard able to nurture a strong army filled with great talents?”

“Richard is a former colonel in the United States’ Special Forces. He knows a few tricks in raising and training people. On top of that, the Monarch class that he received works incredibly well when nurturing soldiers. Just by being a part of his own territory and kingdom, they would be able to grow stronger several times faster than others. That’s why there are a lot of strong people gathered around him.”

The fact that being Richard's subordinate alone would make them grow stronger was something that Minhyuk found to be grave.

"What's the difference between their forces and the Beyond the Heavens' forces?"

"...I can't guarantee who will win."

Orleed used to be one of Richard's trusted aides, so his words were close to, if not the truth.

"Actually, me saying that there's no guarantee on who will win is based on what I know and the info from a few days ago. He became the Absolute God class, Absolute Monarch recently. I can tell with great certainty that it would not be possible for them to dominate the time attack dungeons like they do now if Richard still had the power that he had before, even if he could nurture soldiers well. After all, these time attack dungeons are being challenged by powerhouses from all over the world. But they made it possible now."

"Can you figure out how they made it possible?" Minhyuk asked, but he shook his head not long after. There was no way for Orleed to know about it, right? But then...

"Can you please wait for a moment?"

...Orleed began to send whispers to the players that he was close with in the Maserrati Guild.

"Block."

[You have blocked Connector.]

"Block."

[You have blocked Rucko.]

"Block."

"Block."

"Block."

"Block."

Orleed continued to block people.

"..."

Minhyuk could only stare blankly at Orleed. Then, finally...

Orleed thought that there were quite a lot of people that would know about this in the Maserrati Guild. After all, it would be stranger for them not to know, since the guild had already taken over all of the time attack dungeons.

After gathering information, Orleed reported, "Richard has gained the power 'Absolute Monarch's Stigma', the person that will receive this stigma will gain 20% more power. Of course, the skill can't be used indiscriminately."

"Ah. Oh... R, right."

Minhyuk, who watched Orleed block people more than thirty times in a row, thought, *'Is he going to block me too?'*

However, the thing that he was worried about would never happen. Orleed could only do this because he had seen how Minhyuk was a better king than Richard. Besides, he had already sworn his allegiance to Minhyuk. And Orleed was someone that would strive to remain loyal to the person that he swore his allegiance to, trusting them from the bottom of his heart and following them to the end of the world. At the very least, Orleed would not turn his back on Minhyuk. Well, unless he could find someone that would walk a more reliable, stable and greater path than Minhyuk. That was the reason why Orleed would do all this.

As for the person that Orleed got the information from...

"Block."

[You have blocked Gaide.]

'Orleed would be known in the future as the professional blocker.'

This thought flashed in Minhyuk's head as he said, "Then, all we have to do is take over the first place in all of the time attack dungeons."

Chapter 587: A True Comrade

The appearance of the Maserrati Guild was obviously a threat to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Through Orleed, Minhyuk discovered that the 'Absolute Monarch' was an Absolute God class that appeared to counter Nerva Sephiroth.

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Considering the fact that Nerva Sephiroth would take control of all of the continents in the future, then there would be many people that would come to knock on the doors of the Maserrati Guild. If that happened, then the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom's position would naturally decrease. That

was why Minhyuk had judged that it was necessary for them to take over the rankings of the time attack dungeons.

“We’re going to take over the rankings?”

Orleed could not understand what Minhyuk meant. There were no time attack dungeons available for Level 400~500 players. Because of that, no executives from Beyond the Heavens could go and clear the time attack dungeons.

“Who’s going to take over the rankings?”

At Orleed’s question, Minhyuk looked at the new guild members and said, “Of course, it’s you guys.”

“...Yes?”

“Us?”

“...”

The new guild members looked at Minhyuk in shock. They were the ones that were going to take over the rankings of the time attack dungeon and snatch it from Maserrati Guild? The new guild members were obviously stronger than players at the same level as them. However, compared to the monsters that swept the top spots in the world? They were mere rookies.

“No way...”

“Yes. Exactly.”

Minhyuk chuckled. Orleed spoke up as if he remembered something, “You want us to clear those time attack dungeons with buffed dishes?”

“Dishes?”

“No matter how amazing those dishes are... Is that even possible?”

Murmur, murmur—

A commotion broke out among the new guild members.

From what Orleed said, those that had received the Absolute Monarch’s Stigma were the ones that were dominating the top spot in the time attack dungeons. So, what did that mean? It meant that all of the currently active time attack dungeons allowed ‘buffs’ inside.

If that was the case, all Minhyuk needed to do was to fight a buff with a buff. The effects of Absolute Monarch Richard’s ‘stigma’ was OP, even though they did not know the exact penalty for it.

‘However, my dishes are also like a cheat.’

Minhyuk had already planned to cook for the new guild members to build favor and good feelings with them so he could earn ‘cash’. But doing that for the dungeons seemed like it would give him a better effect. Also...

‘For the time attack dungeon, one Star Coin will be given to the challenger if they achieved a certain record. Furthermore, once the time attack dungeon event ends and they maintain the top spot, all of the dungeon participants that took the spot would be given five Star Coins and a dungeon master ring.’

One coin was worth 25 platinum. A reward of five coins meant that they would gain 125 platinum. And there was also the dungeon master ring. From what Minhyuk heard, it was an event ring that had legendary effects tailored to the level of the item user. All of the Star Coins that they would gain in this venture would be given to Minhyuk while the dungeon master ring would remain in their possession.

How would it be considered unfair?

“We, we’ll stand at the center of the world’s attention...?”

“We’ll get the title of... getting the time attack dungeon’s first place...?”

“Woaaaaah...”

Based on the new guild members’ reactions, they obviously did not think so. After all, Minhyuk was someone that could make the impossible possible. Besides, they had to use Minhyuk’s buffed dishes to achieve this. The words that could perfectly fit their situation was, *‘What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.’*

‘And in the process, I will be able to gain an astronomical amount of cash. After all, they will definitely feel grateful to the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.’

Minhyuk grinned as he looked around the new guild members and said, “All of the new guild members will participate in the time attack dungeon from now on. Make sure to create groups of four. And when you come back...”

He threw his trailer on the ground, the trailer immediately growing in size.

Rumbleeeeeee—

Fweeeeeeeeeeeet—

The cooking trailer that was specialized in making bulk dishes started to operate in the middle of the Stars’ Path. The blazing flames of the eternal flames burst out from the stove as white smoke billowed from the chimney.

“...the best banquet will be waiting for you.”

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom’s new guild members, including Reese, were divided into groups of four and were currently headed straight toward the time attack dungeons. Reese was one of the executives of Minhyuk’s fan cafe: ‘Eat ‘til We Die’.

‘I’ll be eating with Minhyuk?’

Just the thought alone brought excitement to Reese. At the same time, the new guild members, including Reese, were plagued with concerns.

“Can we really do it?”

“In a way, you can say that they’re the world’s number one...”

That was right. The members of Maserrati Guild could be said to be the ones on top of the world since they ranked the first in the time attack dungeons. Guilds from America, Japan, China, and many more countries were struggling to take over the number one spot in these time attack dungeons. However, the gap with the current number one was too wide that they could not do anything against it.

“We have no other choice but to trust His Majesty,” Reese said, his expression that of unswerving faith and trust. Inwardly, he was still concerned. The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom against a newly established nation. As new guild members, would they really be able to do something like that with just their power?

Before they knew it, they had already arrived at the time attack dungeon, the ‘Abyss’ Dungeon’. They chose this dungeon because Reese and the rest of his four-member group were players in the Level 300 range. From what they heard, the Abyss’ Dungeon was a time attack dungeon that had monsters similar to the monsters living deep in the sea or ancient monsters that had degenerated.

The entrance to the time attack dungeon was crowded with people. However, the faces of those that have just challenged it were ugly and distorted. Reese and the rest of his group looked at the record of the time attack dungeon’s top ranker.

Reese and his group were all shocked.

‘There’s an entire 10 minute difference between first and second place?!’

Usually, in time attack dungeons, the time difference between first and second places was around ten seconds. It was already considered a lot to have a 30 seconds time difference between the two places. This gap just went to show how superior the Maserrati Guild was.

Right in front of the dungeon stood people wearing armor and robes with the symbol of a trident on it. One of them said, “Are you trying to challenge this dungeon? Don’t waste your time. Just go back.”

Reese and the others could immediately tell that they were the members of the Maserrati Guild.

“The country that just tried earlier was America. As you can see, they’re still ten minutes apart from us. I don’t know where you’re from but you better give up and book it. Don’t bother wasting your time here. Hahahaha!!!”

“Hey, hey. Don’t be like that, let them try.”

“Wouldn’t they have a 20 minute time difference with us?”

These people had been intoxicated by the ‘Absolute Monarch’s Stigma’ that had increased their power by 20%. They had even mistaken themselves to be someone that had reached the skies.

“Now, now. Turn around and go back.”

Reese, who was an introvert and rarely talked with his party members, blinked at them and said, “But why are you talking informally to me? Are we friends?”

“...?”

“...?”

“I’m from the Beyond the Heavens, you m*therf*cking bastards.”

“...?”

“...?”

Minhyuk had told them these before they went out, *‘Keep in mind that you’re the face of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. If anyone dares to ignore you and mock you, return it to them full hand. I will take full responsibility over your actions.’*

Minhyuk was a great and cool king like that.

Everyone looked at them in confusion.

“You... this f*cking bastard...!”

“Just let him try.”

“Ridiculous.”

“Can’t believe there’s someone this foolish in Beyond the Heavens.”

The Maserrati Guild members mocked them. They looked like they would not deal with the f*ckers in front of them. Reese and his group passed by them and entered the dungeon.

[You have entered the Abyss’ Dungeon.]

[The Abyss’ Dungeon is a Time Attack Dungeon.]

[If you don’t finish the Abyss’ Dungeon within 30 minutes, you will be automatically evicted from the dungeon. Your challenge would be considered a failure.]

[Each person can only attack the time attack dungeon thrice.]

“But Reese... it would be very embarrassing if our record has a huge difference from them...”

“...”

Reese did not think of that. For him, it was alright to bear the ‘shame’ and carry it himself. However, he had used the name of ‘Beyond the Heavens’. That was what he was worried about.

“All we can do is do our best to clear the dungeon.”

In fact, their first try was meant to be a trial, an experiment of some sorts. How long would it take them to clear the dungeon with their own power? Reese and his group had no time to lose. They could not waste even a single second here and began to run as fast as they could.

This was the third day since the time attack dungeons had opened. Attack information? Not much was known. Why? The entire world was competing over these time attack dungeons. They were not sharing information mostly because they wanted to maintain their ranking.

A gigantic catfish suddenly appeared in front of the running group. It was large, seemingly exceeding 15 meters in length alone. The group assumed that this was an ancient monster that had degenerated over time.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Reese was the first to jump and drew blood from the gigantic catfish.

‘I didn’t strike it well.’

He was able to inflict a wound but it was not deep enough to be called fatal. This meant that the catfish’s defense was very high.

“Lightning.”

Crackle, crackle, crackle, crackle—

The mage player released a powerful magical attack that devoured the catfish. Despite trembling from the shock of the attack, the catfish was still able to charge toward them.

“Tanker!”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The tanker immediately stepped forward, raising his round shield and increasing its size to block the charging monster. The catfish opened its mouth to reveal gruesome and sharp teeth.

Slaaaaaaaaash—

Reese took the opportunity to attack its open mouth with his sword and rip them apart.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

It was a good start. It was not that difficult to tear the mouth of the catfish, which was a part that had a significantly lower defense than the rest of its body, causing it tremendous pain and making it struggle profusely. After that, the hunt was easy.

The group immediately moved past the catfish and went to the second section. This time, hundreds of undead mermaids and merknights were swimming in the air and getting ready to charge at them.

‘The second section deals with a large number of monsters.’

The tanker immediately blocked the monsters’ charge, effectively pulling all the aggro while the mage cast an AOE attack magic.

“Fire Field.”

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa—

A burst of blazing flames rose from the ground and stopped the mindless charge of the mob. Reese immediately dug into their gaps and went on a rampage with his sword.

‘What a breath-taking scene.’

‘As expected of players above players.’

Since most of the new guild members were stronger than their peers at the same level, they boasted excellent control.

Finally, the last section.

Baaaaaaaang—

A deafening roar resounded and broke down the walls of the Abyss’ Dungeon. Everyone turned tense at the sound. Then, a figure resembling that of a dragon suddenly fell down from the stalactites above them. To be exact...

[Ancient Imoogi]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

Imoogis could basically be described as undeveloped dragons. However, it was very clear to them that this boss mob was very strong.

“Kihyeeeeeeeeeeck!”

A mind-searing pain tormented them as the Breath that the imoogi shot at them slammed into their bodies.

“Tanker!!!”

“Haaaa!!!”

The tanker had stepped forward but it still looked like he was having a hard time. Reese, with his sword, flew up and stabbed the imoogi on its forehead. However, the attack did not go through.

‘What the hell?! What kind of defense is this...?!’

It was on a completely different level from the catfish from before. Reese and his group struggled fiercely against the imoogi. The reason for their struggle was mainly because of the imugi’s high defense and its considerable damage. Of course, it was still at a level that they could hunt it. However, the problem was that this dungeon was a ‘time attack dungeon’.

‘We need to find a way for us to hunt faster!’

But in the end, Reese and his group could not find a way. All they could do was attack the imoogi as a group and nibble away at its tremendous defense until it fell down. And their record...

[Abyss’ Dungeon.]

[You have cleared the time attack dungeon.]

[Your record is 25 minutes 49 seconds.]

“...”

“...”

“...”

“...”

The faces of Reese and his group turned ugly.

The four people that cleared the Abyss' Dungeon in the first place could not help but guffaw when they saw the people that claimed to be from the 'Beyond the Heavens' rank at the 71st place. They laughed even harder when they saw them coming out of the dungeon.

“Wahahahahahahahaha!”

“Kahahahahahahahahahaha!”

“Bwahahahahahahahahaha!”

“Hey, foolish bastards, where are you going, huh?!”

“As expected! The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is truly insignificant when compared to our guild!!!”

The energetic people from Beyond the Heavens left dispiritedly, their heads bowed down. The members of Maserrati Guild were very pleased.

Richard was able to give the Absolute Monarch's Stigma to around 20 people per day. He could also give it to around 100 people with a 1% reduction in all stats. Richard deliberately gave the stigma to all of the members of Maserrati Guild that would challenge the time attack dungeon, despite the 1% stat reduction penalty.

Having received the stigma, the members of Maserrati Guild felt like they were the 'greatest'. This just went to show how amazing the ability of Absolute Monarch Richard was. There were even mentions of 'Is this the end of Beyond the Heavens' era?' in some community sites. It seemed like this was now the era of the Maserrati Guild, no, Maserrati Kingdom.

But only an hour later, the four members of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom that had left with drooping heads came back. For some reason, a strange sense of confidence was oozing from their bodies.

“What the hell, those f*ckers again?”

“Do you think things will change if you try again?”

The members of Maserrati Guild laughed and mocked them as if they were morons. But not long after then entered...

[Abyss' Dungeon]

[The Time Attack Dungeon's records have been refreshed!]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The members of Maserrati Guild could not believe their eyes. The four people that entered earlier were obviously ten minutes behind them but they were able to get first place just like that? But what was more shocking was...

‘We have received the Absolute Monarch’s Stigma...’

‘They’re around the same level as us too.’

‘What the hell?!’

...the fact that Maserrati Guild lost the 1st place to Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. This was their biggest problem.

Then, the four people came out with proud looks on their faces. At the same time, the Maserrati Guild’s chat window began to explode.

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The members of Maserrati Guild were appalled. Then, the player, Reese, who asked them earlier why they were speaking informally to him approached them.

The person that Reese admired most next to Minhyuk was none other than Ali. That was because he was also an otaku and aspired to be an otaku that followed in Ali’s footsteps.

Reese raised his head sharply and looked down at the members of the Maserrati Guild, with a proud look on his face. Then, he spat out a line that he had seen from an animation, “Don’t ever look down on Beyond the Heavens again.”

“...”

“...”

“...”

Chapter 588: Lady of the Snakes, Leona

After summoning the trailer, Minhyuk was left to ponder on what dish he should make. The fact that this dish would not be easy to make crossed his mind.

‘I don’t know the exact details about the Absolute Monarch’s Stigma but I do know that it can raise someone’s power by 20%.’

On top of that, the troops that Absolute Monarch Richard had nurtured were completely different from the Beyond the Heavens’ new guild members. The new guild members were stronger in terms of control among players of the same level and similar stats. As for the members of Maserrati Guild led by the ‘Monarch’ class Richard, they probably grew stronger by accumulating additional stats. The difference was probably further amplified after they grew 20% stronger.

Of course, there had been cases where Minhyuk’s dishes could also allow those who ate them to have an increase of 20% in their stats. However, it was not really something that he could achieve easily.

‘Furthermore, I have to make bulk dishes.’

Minhyuk could not really cook each and every single one of the new guild members' dishes tailored for them since there were too many dungeons that the Maserrati Guild had taken over. So, he judged that they would only have a chance of winning if he could make bulk dishes with a buff effect that could increase 20% of all of the players’ stats.

Then, Minhyuk immediately thought of the MVP Shop’s slot. The only way for him to unlock the next slot in the MVP Shop was to collect a certain amount of cash. There were also special slots that could only be opened by purchasing it with ‘cash’. These special slots were none other than ‘class specific slots’. Of course, this was most likely a slot for the ‘Food God’ class.

The problem was that it needed 5,000 cash before it could be unlocked. A considerable amount of cash would be consumed just by simply opening a slot? It was definitely an issue. Still, Minhyuk unlocked the slot, thinking that he would be able to get good ingredients.

[Would you like to use 5,000 cash to open the Class Specific Slot?]

“Yes.”

[You have opened the Food God Class Slot.]

Minhyuk had seen before that there were a lot of cooking ingredients that could increase stats permanently in the MVP Shop. However, he had to pay a very high price of 50,000 cash for each of them. They were so expensive that it was impossible for Minhyuk to buy just one of them, even if he combined all of the cash that he had earned so far.

‘It would be a lot cheaper if they had ingredients that only had buff effects.’

The value of an ingredient would be significantly different depending on what kind of effect it could give, whether it could only give buffs or permanent effects. Although ingredients with buffs could provide a better advantage immediately, the fact that it could only be used for a short period of time and could not remain permanently drastically reduced its pros, hence its worth decreased. If

there were ingredients like that, then there was a chance that it was within Minhyuk's acceptable price range.

'There is...!' Minhyuk thought as he saw ingredients with only buff effects in the class specific slot in the shop.

[Chicken with the Blood of a Water Dragon, buff effect ingredient. 35,000 cash. Quantity: 1,000.]

“...”

However, Minhyuk's face turned ugly. Minhyuk had to feed 500 new guild members. The amount of Chicken with the Blood of a Water Dragon available was 1,000, which perfectly suited the number that he had to feed. The problem was that Minhyuk only had around 22,000 cash left. In other words, his cash was far from enough.

'The effects are good too.'

The effects of the ingredient were obviously outstanding. It could unconditionally raise all stats by 10% or more and also increase one's skill level.

'However, considering the infinite potential of the MVP Shop, this is still quite expensive.'

Minhyuk shook off his disappointment and continued to browse through the MVP Shop. He was able to find some ingredients with only buff effects, but most of the things that he found were worth at least 30,000 cash. It was still expensive despite the quantity being over 500.

'If things continued like this then, opening the class specific slot is a waste... huh?'

Minhyuk's finger, which was scrolling through the slot, suddenly stopped.

[Grumpy Gochujang that Does What it Pleases. 20,000 cash. Quantity: Can make something for 500 people.]

'Why is the name like this?' Minhyuk thought, his expression filled with doubt and confusion. For some reason the name was giving off a completely ominous vibe. Nevertheless, he still checked the ingredient's information.

?Possesses an ego.

?The dish made from this ingredient will have an epic~legendary grade. However, the Grumpy Gochujang will judge what grade the dish will have. The opinion of the Grumpy Gochujang will account for 50% of the dish's grade determination.

?The Grumpy Gochujang can make things worse and cause a disaster for the one cooking the dish.

'What kind of bullshit is this...?'

Minhyuk's face was colored in disbelief. The absurd content of the ingredient information was something that he had never encountered before. It was already ridiculous that the gochujang had an ego but it could even determine the dish's grade? On top of that, it could also change the level of spiciness of the dish. In other words, even if Minhyuk was able to make a good dish, if it was spicy enough to the point that a human could not take it then, the dish would be inedible.

‘Is it placed there truly just for the laughs?’

What if that was not the case? The Grumpy Gochujang was worth 20,000 cash so there had to be a chance that it would be nicer than what he thought.

‘We need a strong buff dish to counter and overcome Richard’s Absolute Monarch’s Stigma.’

...Minhyuk needed large amounts of ingredients with special buffs. But he only had around 20,000 cash.

‘Is there really nothing I can do?’

Minhyuk decided to take a gamble. Since he had already determined the buff ingredient that would give him a great boost(?) in strength, he had to choose his main dish. In a way, gochujang, an ingredient that always served as a seasoning, had now turned into the main ingredient. Depending on the Grumpy Gochujang’s mood, the dish that Minhyuk made would either turn into the most delicious gochujang dish, or the most terrible gochujang dish in the world.

‘What’s the dish that will bring out the natural flavor of gochujang? It should also be a dish that foreigners will be able to enjoy.’

There were foreigners among the new guild members of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom. Because of that, Minhyuk had to put in more thought about the dish that he would make.

Minhyuk thought for quite a while until, ‘Bizarre Tteokbokki?’ he finally made a decision. Bizarre tteokbokki was a dish that was loved by people of all ages, despite its spicy and hot flavor. Just thinking about how he would dip some tteokbokki in a bowl of bizarre tteokbokki sauce was enough to make Minhyuk’s mouth water.

‘Its spiciness should be mild.’

The dish should not be too spicy since there were foreigners among their group. Also...

‘Everything will depend on how he will react.’

In the end, the grumpy guy would be the one to decide whether the dish would be spicy or not. The description, which ended abruptly, implied that it could even set a spiciness level that was akin to a nuclear bomb and could kill.

After deciding on what to cook, Minhyuk brought out the Grumpy Gochujang.

[You have used 20,000 cash to purchase the Grumpy Gochujang.]

The Grumpy Gochujang entered Minhyuk’s inventory. And as he entered his trailer, he said, “Let’s do our best, Gochujang.”

Minhyuk assumed that Gochujang was listening since it was stated it has an ego.

[...]

But no answer came out from the gochujang. Minhyuk looked at it curiously before starting to cook.

‘I think it’s better to mix cheese rice cakes and normal rice cakes.’

Minhyuk prepared the two rice cakes while using the ‘ingredient chopping’ skill to chop the vienna sausages and fish cakes into bite sized pieces. Then, he mixed the Grumpy Gochujang, some sugar, starch syrup, and a bit of curry powder for the sauce.

‘It’s quieter than expected?’

Minhyuk had finally used the gochujang. From this point on, the condition of Minhyuk’s dish, whether it would become the best or a disaster, would depend on the gochujang. However, the gochujang remained silent. Minhyuk could not help but smile softly, thinking that things were going smoothly.

The eternal flames burst out and began to heat up the cauldron, causing the water inside to boil. Seeing that, Minhyuk immediately poured the sauce that he prepared inside. When cooking bulk dishes, one had to be careful not to pour all of the sauce all at once. This was because the sauce was heavier than the water and it would fall to the bottom of the pot and might burn. That was why it was important to gently dissolve the sauce in the boiling water.

When Minhyuk was trying to gently dissolve the gochujang-based sauce with his ladle...

[...But I don’t want to?]

“...?!”

A foreboding and ominous feeling crept up the base of Minhyuk’s spine when he heard the voice ring in his head. It seemed like the gochujang finally answered Minhyuk when he said, ‘Let’s do our best.’ earlier, albeit a bit later. Then...

[The Grumpy Gochujang has started to bother you.]

Rumble, rumble—

“This, this is crazy...!!!”

Minhyuk was appalled. The entire trailer began to shake and tremble, like an airplane that met with turbulence. As Minhyuk continued to dissolve the gochujang-based sauce in the pot, flames burst out on the floor beneath his feet.

Crackle, crackle—

The flames immediately heated up the air inside the trailer.

“S, stop...!”

[I don’t want to?]

Minhyuk was able to maintain his balance and dissolve all of the gochujang-based sauce in the cauldron. However, he did not stop there. He immediately added the regular rice cakes, the cheese rice cakes, the vienna sausages and the fishcakes inside. Then, what did he need to do next? The answer to that was mixing and stirring. At that moment...

Rumble, rumble—

...the trailer began to shake and tremble once again. No, to be exact...

‘Even something like this is possible...?’

The trailer rose a meter off of the ground and began to rotate fiercely. Of course, it became difficult for Minhyuk to maintain his balance. On top of that...

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

Minhyuk's invincible body that allowed him to avoid abnormal conditions was like a silver lining, a power that he could rely on. However...

“Stoppppppp!!!”

It was very difficult to cook in a rotating trailer. Then, suddenly...

Clack—

A strange sense suddenly washed over Minhyuk's body. The very same feeling when a flying plane's engine was suddenly cut off. Then, the trailer crashed on the ground.

Thuuuuuuuud—

“Urrrrk!!!!”

Still, Minhyuk did not stop stirring his tteokbokki.

The eternal flames made it possible for Minhyuk to cook delicious dishes with its strong firepower. However, it could also easily burn the bottom of the cauldron. And this was especially true when cooking rice cakes.

Sizzleeee—

“Aaaaaaaack!”

Minhyuk grabbed the handle of the cauldron with his left hand to keep his balance. Since Minhyuk was cooking, the cauldron's body was in an extremely hot state.

[You have received a terrible burn on your left hand.]

[If the damage on your left hand continues to accumulate, the movements of your left hand will be restricted.]

But Minhyuk kept on holding on to the cauldron.

“Let's talk this out! Why are you being so mean!!!!”

[Because I'm the Grumpy Gochujang. Kyahahahahaha!]

The Grumpy Gochujang roared loudly, making the trailer shake terribly. Still, Minhyuk continued to cook. Then...

Thud—

The air suddenly felt heavy. Simply put, the gravity was suddenly amplified, which pressed down on Minhyuk severely. This, too, was obviously a prank played by Grumpy Gochujang.

[Give up. It will be more comfortable for you if you give up. Do you want to be a tomato? Or do you want to be like that tteokbokki that's cooking in the cauldron?]

Crackle, crackle—

The blazing flames climbed up on the cauldron and licked Minhyuk's arms.

[If you don't let go of your left hand's hold on the cauldron, you may lose the use of your left arm.]

[Your HP is dropping at a rapid rate.]

The bastard was truly outrageous. Minhyuk was having a harder time than when he cooked the giant cow's marrow bone or the giant chicken.

[Why don't you give up? What are you cooking this for? Huh? Kyahahahahahaha!]

"Because there are people who want to eat my food!"

[...]

Minhyuk's words silenced the Grumpy Gochujang for a moment. Perhaps the bastard realized something from his words? Maybe the owner of the gochujang's ego was also once a chef?

[...Is that so? Then, I should stop. I am in awe of your heart and passion. You're really cool.]

Baaaaaaang—

Then, a huge thunderstorm slammed on the trailer from the skies above. The trailer shook greatly, throwing Minhyuk back swiftly.

"Did, didn't you just say that you would stop?!!!"

[You believed that? What a moron.]

"...Hey, m*therf*cker! F-machinegun #%#\$%%@\$#" Minhyuk cursed as he crawled through the trailer and fought against gravity to get back to the cauldron.

[Give up. What's the use of doing something for others? Do you want to become like me? Kyahahahaha! Now, typhoon! Blow fiercely!!!]

Then, a typhoon engulfed the entire trailer.

The trailer, which was devoured by the typhoon, rose from the ground and spun around and around from the fierce winds blowing over it. Fortunately the cauldron was deep enough that its contents would not spill despite the tumultuous surroundings. However, Minhyuk held on tightly to the cauldron just to make sure. Of course, he never stopped cooking. Huge beads of sweat formed on his forehead and dripped down his face. Even the veins on his neck and arms bulged from overexertion.

"Just a bit more..."

[Bastard! Even if you cook desperately like that, the dish that you will create will be trash that cannot be eaten!!!]

But Minhyuk had already fallen into a trance and could not hear the words of the Grumpy Gochujang at all. The Grumpy Gochujang stared at Minhyuk, who was still cooking despite the pressure that was overwhelming him.

[You look just like me in the past. A moron that lived for others but disappeared from their hands. An unfortunate fool.]

Minhyuk did not hear those words either. He just continued to cook with everything that he had. And finally, he sprinkled plenty of mozzarella cheese on the tteokbokki cooking in the cauldron.

Minhyuk seemed to know the reason why the Grumpy Gochujang was acting like this. He continued to sprinkle the cheese while saying, “Stop blaming yourself. You did your best.”

[...??]

“Even if all of the people that you helped cursed you and betrayed you, the fact that you’re the best would still remain.”

The Grumpy Gochujang’s reaction was only natural from Minhyuk’s perspective. After all, gochujang was a ‘one-time consumable item’. Once it was cooked and eaten, then the gochujang was done for. Basically, the Grumpy Gochujang would disappear once this was over.

How scary would that be?

How lonely would he be?

How painful and sad would it be?

That was why Minhyuk said, “The fact that I can use you as an ingredient...”

The mozzarella cheese that was being sprinkled over the tteokbokki looked like white snow melting atop the blooming red flowers.

“...Thank you.”

Silence enveloped the surrounding for a moment. And amidst that silence.

[Fufu—]

A small laughter rang. Then, the notifications rang in Minhyuk’s ears.

[You have made a Legendary Bizarre Tteokbokki!]

[The mysterious existence with power that surpassed the gods has granted a special power to your dish!!!]

[The Legendary Bizarre Tteokbokki will have the most delicious spicy flavor depending on the person eating.]

[The mysterious existence with power that surpassed the gods has granted a special power to you!]

[All of your stats have increased by 2%!]

[Your cooking skill proficiency has increased dramatically!]

[You have acquired the Puzzling Seasoning Jar.]

This day marked the first meeting of Minhyuk and his second teacher right after Sword Emperor Ellie.

Chapter 589: Lady of the Snakes, Leona

Did Joy Co. Ltd. create the Grumpy Gochujang for no reason at all? Everything in Athenae was related to ‘scenarios’, ‘quests’ or other events, so would they create a gochujang with an ego just for laughs? Minhyuk believed that it was unlikely.

As it turned out, it was a mysterious existence with a power that surpassed even the gods. It even blessed Minhyuk with a +2% increase in all of his stats. On top of that, the spiciness of the dish would vary depending on who would eat the gochujang-based dish.

‘What an amazing ability.’

The dish would set the most delicious spiciness level depending on the person that would consume the dish. Minhyuk had never heard of an ability like this. However, one thing was for sure. This was an ability that all of the chefs in the world would covet.

As for the Puzzling Seasoning Jar that Minhyuk obtained...

‘If it’s a seasoning jar that has the ability that I’m thinking of then...’

If it was as Minhyuk guessed, then its power was likely to be astronomical. In fact, the seasoning jar’s ability that Minhyuk was thinking of was simple. Just as the gochujang adjusted its flavor to suit the taste of the one that would eat it, what if the salt that he would get from the seasoning jar would also make the dish its most delicious version based on the person eating it?

‘That would be insane...’

Any kind of dish served to others all over the world would be seasoned by the chef that made it. However, everyone’s taste buds and palates were different. Some preferred it salty, some preferred it to be plain and simple, while some preferred it bland.

The first thing that Minhyuk did was to check the Puzzling Seasoning Jar.

???

???

???

?Something that possesses an ego is slumbering inside. It might wake up at unexpected times.

‘It really is a puzzling seasoning jar...’

It was exactly as its name suggested. The seasoning jar was truly puzzling and confusing. However, one particular thing stood out to Minhyuk.

‘That guy is slumbering inside this?’

It seemed like the ego of the Grumpy Gochujang was sleeping inside the Puzzling Seasoning Jar. Minhyuk did not know if its power that went beyond the gods was something temporary or not. However, he was sure that it was a noteworthy existence and it was now sleeping inside the seasoning jar that he acquired.

After he finished cooking and checking everything, Minhyuk finally saw the sad figures of his new guild members approaching his trailer. One look at their sullen figures and Minhyuk began to rush. He quickly prepared various fried fritters and even some rice balls to go with the Bizarre Tteokbokki.

“We’ve been smashed.”

“What kind of record did those guys make in the time attack dungeon?”

“Richard’s power is too strong...”

Most of the guild members that had returned were feeling lost and dispirited. It seemed like the wall that was blocking their path was a tad bit too high for them. From what it looked like they were under great pressure. Minhyuk hoped that his new guild members would forget the stress once they ate this Bizarre Tteokbokki. Of course, the same was true for Minhyuk. He had been very busy these past few days. Because of that, his stress had accumulated. After confirming that everyone had returned, Minhyuk began to distribute the Bizarre Tteokbokki.

Among them was the group that Orleed belonged to. They had experienced a level that they could not reach. All of them were at most only at rank 70.

“So, this is who Richard is...” Orleed said. He had decided to serve Minhyuk in the heat of the moment after seeing countless possibilities with him. However, he still could not hide the bitterness after witnessing how great Richard’s underlings were.

At that moment, Minhyuk gave them a portion of Bizarre Tteokbokki, some fried fritters, rice balls and a can of julpis. Minhyuk said, “This dish will definitely make you feel a whole lot better.”

After distributing all of the new guild members’ shares, Minhyuk settled down and began to eat himself. Orleed looked down at the white stretch of cheese on top of the blazing red tteokbokki.

“Is this the dish that you call tteokbokki?”

“That’s right.”

“Isn’t this super spicy?”

“It’s spicy but it’s also very delicious.”

There were Koreans among Orleed’s group and that was what they said about the dish. Then, Orleed looked at Minhyuk. Minhyuk was smiling happily despite the beads of perspiration dripping down from his forehead as he ate the Bizarre Tteokbokki.

‘This is not the time to eat like that, Your Majesty,’ Orleed thought bitterly, ‘I can’t eat something overly spicy.’

Then, Orleed picked up his chopsticks and clamped a piece of rice cake. Foreigners often had to smell their food first before putting it into their mouths whenever they tried food from other countries. Orleed did just that. When he finally placed it in his mouth, the spicy flavor spread in his mouth as the chewy texture of the rice cake greeted him.

‘It’s spicy... but...’

It was delicious as well. Orleed picked up another rice cake; this time, it was the slightly chubbier one. The rice cake that he picked up was none other than the cheese rice cake. The moment he bit on it, the rich, savory flavor of the cheese burst in his mouth and perfectly complemented the spicy flavor, washing away a bit of its edge.

“...Delicious.”

“Wow. This is really delicious.”

Even the Koreans that were eating together with Orleed were impressed by the taste. Next, Orleed tasted the fishcake that had been soaked with the gochujang-based sauce.

“This fishcake is the best.”

It seemed like Orleed preferred fishcakes over rice cakes in the Bizarre Tteokbokki. This time, he tried the vienna sausage.

“Mhmm~ Yummy!” Orleed shouted in admiration. His mouth felt hot as if a flame had been lit in his mouth and his forehead was covered in sweat. He quickly pulled out a handkerchief and wiped off the sweat on his forehead. That was when Orleed saw Minhyuk gulp down the drink called julpis.

Orleed immediately copied Minhyuk, pouring out the peach-flavored julpis in a cup. The cold temperature of the julpis seeped through the cup and was transmitted through his hand. Then, he immediately gulped the cold julpis.

“*Kghhk*~ What the hell? This drink tastes so good!”

The drink washed away the lingering spiciness in his mouth. This time, Orleed turned his attention toward the rice balls. The rice balls had some chopped pickled radish, tobiko, seaweed powder, sesame seeds, and the like. When he placed the rice ball in his mouth...

“Wow...”

Orleed wondered how a rice ball made up of the most ordinary ingredients could taste so divine.

“It will taste even better if you eat it like this.”

Orleed watched as the Koreans dipped their rice balls in the tteokbokki sauce before putting it in their mouths. He copied what they were doing and could only stare wide-eyed at the dish in front of him. This time, he tried the fried seaweed roll. Of course, he also dipped the fried seaweed roll in the tteokbokki sauce. And the moment he placed it in his mouth...

Crunch—

The tteokbokki sauce added a dash of flavor in the fried seaweed roll’s crunchy texture.

“Wow...”

Orleed continued to eat, admiration plastered all over his face. From the moment he ate, his mind had been completely empty. He did not realize this fact until he was full and satiated.

‘Is this the reason why Koreans like to eat spicy food when they’re stressed?’

Sweat might have soaked their clothes but the stress that they were feeling was swept away. After eating almost everything on his plate, Orleed gulped all of the julpis in his cup in one go.

"Kghhk~"

Then, the notifications rang.

[You have eaten the Bizarre Tteokbokki.]

[Legendary Grade.]

[All of your stats will increase by 28%. Your class specific skill's level will increase by +2!]

[All of your attacks will have a fire-attribute attached to it!]

[The buff will last for 12 days.]

"...?"

"...??"

"...???"

Everyone in Orleed's group was dumbfounded after they finished eating their tteokbokki. The Food God's dishes were well known for being overpowered, on top of their exquisite flavor. However, some people, who were jealous of the Food God and wanted to undermine him, spread false rumors about his dishes. However, today, they found out the truth. Those testaments were not exaggerated at all. No, to be exact...

'Crazy! He made buffed dishes with this kind of effect for all 500 people?'

'Are you joking with me...?'

'All hail... Our Lord the Food God...'

Orleed gulped dryly. Absolute Monarch Richard had the OP skill Absolute Monarch's Stigma. The Absolute Monarch's Stigma could increase the power of around ten people free of penalty, anything more than that, say for a hundred people, Richard had to sacrifice a percent of all his stats to make them grow stronger.

But what about Minhyuk's dishes? It did not have any penalty. On top of that, they estimated that the Absolute Monarch's Stigma's duration would only last for around a day or two. As for the worth of Minhyuk's dishes...

'For 12 days, we will be able to hunt boss monsters that we dare not even imagine hunting before.'

'If we have this much power, then we will be able to complete the quests that we weren't able to complete before.'

'We can also get first place in the time attack dungeon.'

Richard's guild members had higher stats compared to the players at the same level as them. If their stats were made equal, then the ones that would have the upperhand would be the members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

‘What a freaking cool king...’ Orleed thought in admiration. Of course, it was not just him, everyone present here were looking at Minhyuk in awe and admiration. Also...

‘I will not be afraid of anything as long as I’m with him.’

All of them had lost their fighting spirit earlier. But now, it was reignited, blazing in their hearts. They wanted to show the world their, and their king’s, outstanding move!

At the same time, a set of notifications began to ring in Minhyuk’s ears.

[The guild members that have tasted your food dream of staying by your side forever.]

[The loyalty of the guild members that have tasted your food has soared to the skies, they will walk through fire if you say so.]

[You have earned 503 cash.]

[You have earned 601 cash.]

[You have earned 731 cash.]

[...earned 511 cash.]

[Additional cash slots have been opened.]

[You have earned 724 cash.]

[...earned 621 cash.]

Minhyuk earned 50,000 cash all in one go. After checking the newly opened cash slots, Minhyuk thought, *‘This slot has legendary-rank artifacts. The ingredients are also of a better quality.’*

Minhyuk suddenly grew curious about the items that he would see once he opened another slot. Then, Minhyuk looked at the guild members, whose morale was almost boiling over, and said, “What are you guys doing?”

Everyone turned to look at him at the sound of his voice.

“Go and take the throne.”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

The members of Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, with their overwhelming momentum and majestic aura, rushed back to take the throne in the time attack dungeons, the very same time attack dungeons that they struggled clearing earlier.

When one clicked on the ‘event’ section located on one side of the Athenae official homepage, everything related to events would appear on the screen. Among these were the Stars’ Path Time Attack Dungeons.

Most of the time attack dungeons located in the Stars’ Path had been dominated by the Maserrati Guild. On top of that, these time attack dungeons would end in two hours. Many netizens and experts had shared their opinion about this matter.

[Maserrati Guild's domination is a threat to the world. Someone has to stop them.]

[They might be outstanding people, but don't you think it's a bit too much to say that they're a threat to the world? The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is superior and outstanding but you don't say that they are a threat to the world.]

[No. This and that are completely different matters. The Maserrati Guild has currently taken over the ranking boards. The problem is that many people will be interested in them and knock on their doors. The reason why they are able to dominate the time attack dungeons is because of Richard, the one that recently got promoted to the Absolute Monarch class. In fact, they are even actively promoting that you will be able to gain a stronger power if you come to their guild. It's a statement that will definitely have a huge impact. Perhaps, their population will even exceed that of the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom in two weeks' time.]

[Then, why are the other guilds just staying still?]

[They are not staying still. Hey, have you really searched things properly? Right now, each and every country in the world is struggling to break and create a new record in the time attack dungeons. But each time, they're only able to get around a 5~10 minute gap. In other words, they can't break through.]

[To put it simply, they're f*cked? But why does it seem like the Beyond the Heavens is not moving?]

[Even if they're the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom, it will still be hard for them to make a difference. Beyond the Heavens have a lot of outstanding Named NPCs and Level 400~500 rankers but most of the time attack dungeons are only for those at Level 300 and below.]

[The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is the best but there's no such thing as the best in every facet. Their mid-level players would not be able to reach the Maserrati Guild's level.]

But then, at that moment...

[Abyss' Dungeon's records have been refreshed!]

[...Oh? Beyond the Heavens is doing well, though?]

[Wow... 13 minutes and 30 seconds... that's dope...]

[As expected, the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom is the best. They can't stand the thought of the Maserrati Guild dominating the entire event.]

[Baroque's Dungeon's records have been refreshed!]

[...???

[...???

[...???

[...???

[Blue Mermaid's Dungeon's records...!]

[Gleaming Plain's Dungeon's records...!]

[...records...]

[...Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...]

[...records have been refreshed...]

[...Beyond the Heavens Kingdom...]

It all happened in an instant. In just a short fifteen minutes, all of the records in all of the listed time attack dungeons, from one to fifty, had the name 'Beyond the Heavens Kingdom' written on them. Everyone that saw this just stared blankly at their screens.

[Hey... Isn't this a bug?]

[I also think it's a bug...?]

[Hey, operators! Why aren't you doing your job properly?! You bastards!!!]

However, an announcement was posted immediately after this had happened.

[Joy Co. Ltd. has immediately reviewed the reports about a bug found on the homepage. However, we have confirmed that there are no bugs. We will continue to work hard to provide a smooth experience for the public. Thank you.]

[Hey, it's not a bug!!!]

[OMG! Then, it's true!!!!]

In just half an hour, the entire game was turned upside down. At the same time, words that were enlarged and in bold appeared above the screen where the time attack dungeon records were shown.

[The Time Attack Dungeon event is about to end!]

[Star Coins and Dungeon Master Rings will be distributed to the ones that won first place in the time attack dungeons.]

In the end, the one that got the last laugh was the Beyond the Heavens Kingdom.

Stars' Path.

Absolute Monarch Richard was in disbelief after seeing the sudden reversal in the time attack dungeons.

'How in the world...?'

Obviously, when he had just checked an hour ago, the Maserrati Guild was still dominating and monopolizing the top spot in the rankings. But everything suddenly turned around.

'As expected, it's not easy to get one over them, huh?'

Richard did not underestimate the Food God. Richard was a careful, meticulous man and was not someone that would grow upset or angry because he found out that he still underestimated someone. All Richard could do was laugh bitterly.

“What are we going to do?”

“It’s fine. We’ll just make our name known by hunting one of the Six Monster Gods’ children, Elizabeth’s child, the one called the Lady of the Snakes.”

The Six Monster Gods were the key roles in all of the quests and monster scenarios in the Stars’ Path. Just like what was mentioned before, the Six Monster Gods were Athenae’s children that were driven away and eventually settled down in the Stars’ Path. The weakest among them was Elizabeth, the God of Snakes. But even if she was the weakest, no human could fight against her.

But this was not the case for Elizabeth’s children.

The Six Monster Gods all gave birth to children of their own. Their children’s strength was divided according to their ‘class’. Their class followed the same class system in the demon world where they were divided into marquises, counts, barons, and the likes.

The one that the Maserrati Guild was about to awaken was the count-level ‘Snake’s Child’. Even if the child was only at the count-level, one could not ignore its power. In the first place, the Six Monster Gods were beings that had the power to confront the Absolute Gods. Of course, their children would also be born with a strong power. As for those at the count-level, they were beings that even a decent kingdom could not stop. However, the Maserrati Guild was determined to stop such a being.

And the one that would awaken the count-level being was none other than ‘Lion King Benrod’. Lion King Benrod was one of the active figures during the Battle of the Thrones and was a legend among all of the summoners. He was here to awaken the count-level monster. Then, the Maserrati Guild would immediately hunt the monster and declare the creation of their own kingdom.

“From what I heard, the Beyond the Heavens’ King is also here.”

“Are you worried that he will be able to raid the monster before we can even do so?”

“...Yes.”

“You don’t have anything to worry about. The count-level monster will already die under our hands even before he comes.”

But then, at that moment, the sky covering the Stars’ Path suddenly turned bloody red.

“Hiiiiisss—”

“Hiiiiis—”

“...?”

“...?”

They were shocked to see thousands of snakes suddenly appearing from the trees, bushes, rocks and all over the place. At the same time, a horrifying notification hit them.

[God of Snakes' Elizabeth First Child.]

[Marquess Leona has awakened to the world.]

A great catastrophe was about to befall the Stars' Path.

Chapter 590: Lady of the Snakes, Leona

God of Snakes Elizabeth was said to be the weakest among the Six Monster Gods. However, there were cases where some of the Six Monster Gods possessed a stronger power than the Absolute Gods.

God of Snakes Elizabeth had a total of fifteen children. There was one talented child that had inherited Elizabeth's abilities and that child was none other than Marquess Leona. In fact, Marquess Leona could be considered God of Snakes' Elizabeth's heir. Her powers might be less than Elizabeth's power right now, but in time, she would be able to surpass her mother. Elizabeth wanted Leona to protect her other children. That was why there was a system where Leona would be the one to awaken first when someone tried to awaken one of Elizabeth's baron-level or count-level children.

"Damn it..." Lion King Benrod cursed, his face filled with urgency and embarrassment. He was currently conducting the ceremony to awaken the count-level monster Benz inside the Snake Temple. However, instead of awakening Benz, the one that awakened was Marquess Leona.

Although Lion King Benrod was someone that had reached the realms of the Absolute Supreme NPC, he was still not confident enough to deal with the marquis-level Leona right here and now. That just went to show how dangerous a marquis-level being was.

Vwoooooooooooooooooong—

Benrod swiftly summoned the God of Beasts. The gigantic lion appeared and was immediately on alert, its eyes watching the unusually large red egg as its shell cracked.

Crack, crack, crack—

Thud—

Some of the shells began to fall down on the ground. At the same time...

[Snakes' Fetters have been triggered!]

[All of your skills will be temporarily unavailable.]

[All of your parchments and potions will be temporarily unavailable.]

"...?!"

This was reality. Both God of Snakes Elizabeth and her first child, Marquess Leona, were said to have the power to control the system. NPCs viewed the system as Athenae's absolute power, that was why they could not imagine somebody else being able to control it.

But now, something so unbelievable had happened.

"Kiyaaaaaaaaack!"

A horrifying cry rang from deep within the egg. Lion King Benrod immediately climbed on the back of the God of the Beasts. His original purpose was to awaken Elizabeth's count-level child and lure it toward the members of the Maserrati Guild. Once they hunted the being, they would be able to swiftly end the situation. But now the situation had suddenly turned for the worse.

'There's absolutely no way that I will be able to lure her.'

Benrod would be devoured before he could even do that. And Benrod was someone that never engaged in a reckless and meaningless fight. The only answer to this predicament was to join the Maserrati Guild and hunt Leona.

Dash, dash, dash—

The God of Beasts ran furiously while Leona's feminine figure, which finally broke free from the egg, stretched to remove the transparent and sticky mucus that clung to her. As she made her appearance, another series of notifications rang in Benrod's ears and the rest of the world.

[Snakes' World.]

[Leona's power has covered the entire Stars' Path.]

[The players' entrance has been restricted.]

[Players that are already inside the Stars' Path will only be able to leave the Stars' Path after 24 hours.]

Immediately after...

[The God of Snakes' Army has awakened.]

Around fifty snakes appeared around Leona. The snakes writhed in place until their figures grew in size. The snakes of Elizabeth's Army grew until they were two meters tall, their faces like that of a dragon, with smooth scales covering their bodies. With fair skin and a hair of poisonous vipers, Leona walked out of the Snakes' Army.

"Since you tried to kill my sibling," Leona said as she looked out at the Stars' Path, "then all of you shall die."

After taking over all of the time attack dungeons, Minhyuk went out to hunt with the new guild members and was now thinking about returning.

'What a shame, I couldn't open all of the slots in the MVP Shop.'

However, there was nothing he could do. After all, collecting and earning cash was harder than what he thought. Besides, they had already been hunting for several days. The exhaustion of the soldiers and the new guild members would definitely start to pile up if they continued to linger in the Stars' Path.

Also, Minhyuk had already achieved what he needed to. All of the new guild members handed over the Star Coins that they have gained as a reward to him, the total value easily exceeding 100,000 platinum.

Leaving behind his only regret, Minhyuk tried to order their return when thousands of poisonous snakes appeared on the trees, under the rocks, and all over the ground.

“Hiiissss—”

“Hiiiiiiiiiiissss—”

“A, aaaaaaaack!”

“What, what the hell?!”

“Why did snakes appear all of a sudden?”

At the same time, the sky above them turned red.

[God of Snakes’ Elizabeth First Child.]

[Marquess Leona has awakened to the world.]

“...?”

Minhyuk’s face turned ugly. He had already investigated the Six Monster Gods and their children before entering the Stars’ Path.

‘Why did she suddenly awaken?’

Minhyuk could not understand. If nobody touched them, then these beings should not have awakened yet.

‘No way. Did someone deliberately awaken her?’

As the question floated in Minhyuk’s head...

[Snakes’ World.]

[Leona’s power has covered the entire Stars’ Path.]

[The players’ entrance has been restricted.]

[Players that are already inside the Stars’ Path will only be able to leave the Stars’ Path after 24 hours.]

...a series of notifications rang.

‘The situation has turned serious.’

Leona had the power to control the system. And she had now started to control the entire Stars’ Path. What did that mean? It meant that she intended to lock them up and kill them all.

‘Does this mean that we can’t log out?’

Minhyuk immediately tried it.

[You can log out in four hours.]

Fortunately, although they were blocked from leaving the Stars’ Path for 24 hours, they were allowed to log out in four hours. But even if that was the case, Minhyuk still could not afford to log out.

'If it's just the guild members, then it's fine. But the soldiers are NPCs, if I leave, they will be left in a dangerous situation.'

"Uaaaaaaaaack!"

"Die!!!"

The snakes began to leap through the air and bite the soldiers and the guild members. If they were spread like this throughout the entire Stars' Path, then the snakes had to number over tens of millions.

"Keok?! I'm paralyzed. I did not even realize that I got bitten by a snake?"

"I'm poisoned..."

"I'm in a stunned state."

The worst part? The snakes that Leona released were giving different abnormal status to the people that they had bitten.

Centurion Park immediately approached Minhyuk, "Your Majesty, your orders?"

"We will watch the situation."

The Beyond the Heavens Kingdom did not need to step up in this situation. If they stepped up, there was a possibility that they would lose their troops. Their main goal right now was to hide in a safe place and exit the Stars' Path after 24 hours.

Minhyuk looked at the Stars' Path that was now dyed with the red color being reflected by the skies. Beyond that horizon, a blood festival was unfolding.

Vietnam, Thailand, and China had formed an alliance and were currently hunting together in the Stars' Path. This was an event that the three countries jointly held to promote their good relationship and do well together after the servers had integrated. There were 8,000 players participating from China, while Vietnam and Thailand had 4,000 each. There were places in the Stars' Path where monsters appeared on a large scale. The three countries were strengthening their friendship and unity by hunting in such places.

Each of these countries' leading figures stood at the vanguard so as not to fall behind from each other in this alliance. Vietnam had Master Archer Miao, while China had Xu Jiaqi and the members of Black Dragon Order, who participated in the Battle of the Thrones. The guild master and members of the Tiger Guild, the best guild in Thailand, also participated.

They were in the middle of an easy hunt when they heard the notifications about Leona. But their numbers were huge. They even had Supreme NPC-class figures among them. Because of that, none of them really felt fear. Besides, their numbers were too large for them to hide just because of a mere fear.

At that moment, Master Archer Miao, with her eyes that could see through a thousand li, saw Leona and her snake army coming their way.

“...That’s quite unusual,” Miao mumbled, her face turning ugly.

The ground that they were passing through was being razed and devastated. Everyone, whether they were players or NPCs, was being swept away.

“This... we can’t avoid them.”

“...That seems to be the case.”

“It’s also an opportunity for us.”

Miao could see with her eyes how everyone that they passed through got slaughtered. If a large army like theirs avoided this and escaped, then they might receive countless criticisms for a very long time. The disaster that was unfolding on the Stars’ Path...

“We have to do something about it.”

Stretch—

Master Archer Miao pulled the strings of her bow. As the world’s best archer, Miao’s arrows were very powerful. Although the name was childish, it was powerful enough to wipe out thousands of her enemies.

“Nuclear bomb.”

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang—

The arrow created a shocking soundwave as it flew toward Leona’s forehead, who was still quite a distance away from Miao. If the arrow hit its target successfully, it would create a huge explosion that would cover a 50 meter radius and devastate everything within, as if a nuclear bomb had fallen upon them.

However, something unexpected happened. The arrow that was flying fiercely in the air slowly hardened and turned to stone. In the end, the arrow, which had completely turned to stone, fell down on the ground, as its weight killed off its momentum.

Drop—

“...!”

Miao looked at the scene in horror.

‘Leona has the ability to completely nullify others’ abilities?!’

Then, Leona’s hair-raising eyes met with Miao’s own eyes. Leona’s eyes were yellow and had long slits of black as its pupils, a truly terrifying sight.

“...”

Goosebumps rose on Miao’s back.

‘She can see me from that distance?’

Miao could see through that distance since she was a Master Archer, but Leona was not one. Immediately after that, Leona and her army advanced swiftly to where the alliance was. Their speed was so fast that they seemed to have been flying over the ground.

“P, prepare for battle!”

Miao finally realized the seriousness of the situation. The snake army arrived where they were in just one minute. Then, the clash began which horrified the entire world.

Breaking news poured out nonstop.

[The 16,000-strong allied forces from China, Vietnam and Thailand have been completely wiped out by Leona.]

[The allied forces were annihilated, just 30 minutes after the battle began.]

[Leona wiped out the entire allied forces, with her shocking power to render all skills impossible to use and her ability to summon tens of thousands of snakes that can inflict countless abnormal statuses.]

[Leona’s ability to turn anything into stone by making eye contact with her has made even Master Archer Miao helpless.]

[It seems like Leona’s ability to turn everything into stone can be used with a time lag. That’s the most pressing problem right now.]

[Experts are now making absurd suggestions. They are saying that it’s best to fight Leona with their eyes closed.]

[It’s not entirely impossible. There are Absolute Supreme NPCs in the world. If it were them, then it’s not that impossible to fight with their eyes closed.]

[According to our estimates, more than 200,000 have already died at the hands of Leona since she appeared in the Stars’ Path.]

[The worst disaster is now unfolding in the Stars’ Path. This has brought both frustration and confusion to the players that entered the Stars’ Path to enjoy the new content.]

[The players that went there to hunt with their NPC friends have now lost their friends forever. Some of the players even died with their families during a party hunt.]

[Joy Co. Ltd. seems to be avoiding the situation by saying that it’s also a player’s responsibility to solve their own difficulties.]

[Is there anyone that can deal with such an unprecedented disaster?]

Richard also saw the breaking news.

‘It’s like I killed those 200,000 players.’

Richard was not a trashy monarch. He dutifully broke the time attack dungeon’s records with his guild members and tried to awaken only the count-level being and hunt it as fast as he could to avoid harming someone else. However, his actions had inadvertently hurt many players and NPCs.

It was because of Richard’s personality that many people chose to follow him. In front of him stood 1,000 of the Maserrati Guild’s strongest. They were the ones that came here to hunt the count-level being in the first place. Twenty of them were Rankers Above Rankers, some of the powerhouses that were talked about in the world. Two of them were unofficial rankers, whose powers could rival

the kings that participated in the Battle of the Thrones. Of course, that was only the case when the kings had not yet received an additional 50% increase in their powers.

“From now on, we will lure Leona and her army and slaughter her here so that others will no longer suffer.”

“But My Lord, if we make one wrong move then everyone here will...”

“Everything happened because of my carelessness. We should not let any more innocent people suffer and get harmed. You can choose to join me or leave. Even if you leave, I will not hold it against you even if you choose to leave the guild.”

Richard’s words were an indication of the weight that was placed on his shoulders. His words meant that he would pay for the crime that he committed. However, this was the monarch that they all chose to believe and follow.

“We will stay with you.”

“Please give us your order.”

“Salute!!!”

“Salute!!!”

Their hearts were filled with the blazing flames of their fighting spirit.

‘He’s a good monarch,’ Someone thought.

That someone was actually Minhyuk, who was hiding with his guild members and soldiers in a cave near the place where the members of Maserrati Guild had gathered.

‘Of all places, why here...?’

There was only a hundred meter distance between the cave hidden by the vines where Minhyuk and his men were hiding, and the wall where the members of Maserrati Guild were gathered in front of.

Cold sweat began to drip down Minhyuk’s forehead.