

Chapter 951

The guardian, Benz, leaped forward. The ground that she stepped on formed a big dent and produced a loud explosion. It was an exaggerated phenomenon caused by the weight of her armor and shield, but it was right to interpret it as a transcendental strength.

“She’s coming!”

The nervous Group B players pulled out their weapons in unison. A sandy wind swirled around them as they watched the knight rise high into the sky. This was a wide-range protection spell used by the earth magician, Goshar. It seemed he wanted to make up for his failure at the beginning.

“I’ll stop her, so attack in that gap!” The German ranker, Weldon, came to the forefront. Benz’ red sword fell onto his shield. It was a stab. There were no problems up to here. Weldon was ranked 6th on the guardian knight rankings. He was like steel as he set up his shield. The

problem was the stab that came immediately afterward had the power to turn the steel into tofu. There was a heavy sound, and Weldon's shield was dented.

‘The weight increased?’

He wasn't mistaken. The damage rose while the weight of the sword also increased rapidly. Weldon's wrists were broken from the weight that he couldn't manage.

“Endure!”

A large number of people came forward. They released their skills, wielded swords and spears, fired arrows, or threw daggers. Half of them were blocked by Benz' side shield. The other half were blocked by the line of Benz' sword. Simultaneously, Benz' sword released dozens of red crystals in all directions. It was reminiscent of how Kraugel's sword released stone thorns.

[You have suffered 4,390 damage.]

[The crystals embedded in your body will interfere with the recovery effects.]

“What the hell...”

It wasn't easy to block skills instead of general attacks with just high proficiency in swordsmanship and shieldsmanship. This was obviously a high level skill or an effect attached to the item. As the players were analyzing this, Benz moved quickly. She knocked down a player close to her with the shield, pushing the player behind him as well. Then she leaped forward and fell to Goshar's side. Benz had noticed that the sandy wind reduced her attack power.

“Hiik...!” Goshar was casting the wide-range skill and couldn't protect his own body. As the monster's sword headed toward him, someone acted to protect the defenseless Goshar. It was Coke, the secret weapon raised by the Overgeared Guild's 10 meritorious retainers. He threw an axe at Benz' sword, interrupting her movements. Then he pulled out a spear and stabbed

her.

Benz was wounded for the first time. The spear pierced her shoulder and created a gap as she flinched back, allowing a sword to slash at her neck. It was Peak Sword's Draw Sword, executed from where he was standing next to Coke. Iyarugt was as ferocious as a beast after accumulating power in Iyarugt's Sheath.

The neck protector that Benz wore shattered, and blood gushed out. The blood of the heavenly king was as red as a human's. Peak Sword confirmed Benz' health gauge after her neck was exposed and clicked his tongue. "Isn't her defense terrifying?"

The tone was light, but his expression was dark. It was difficult to conceal his irritation because the charged Iyarugt didn't deal much damage. It seemed that his irritation created a big gap.

"Avoid it!" Someone shouted, and Peak Sword reflexively moved back. However, it was too late to defend against

the cut to his shoulders.

[You have suffered 15,900 damage.]

Peak Sword was a member of the Overgeared Kingdom's 10 meritorious retainers, and he was armed with the best items. The armor and helmet that Grid had produced personally protected Peak Sword. He was greatly wounded despite the protection of the sandstorm. Benz tried to attack the confused Peak Sword again.

“Where are you going?”

The Dungeon Maker—Eat Spicy Jokbal who showed as much power as a legendary class in his dungeon—attracted Benz' attention.

“...” Benz' momentum stopped.

Coke, Peak Sword, and Eat Spicy Jokbal—the three Korean representatives—were leading Group B. Goshar and the other proud rankers had unknowingly started depending on them. They followed the instructions Peak

Sword gave, assisted Coke whenever he went to the forefront, and protected Eat Spicy Jokbal when he made an advantageous change to the dungeon.

The blood of the Korean viewers boiled. The Korean rankers, who were ignored by the world a few years ago, were now the world's leading stars... It was a new feeling. All Korean players burned with the desire to join the Overgeared Guild. The anticipation and excitement of what it would be like to join the Overgeared Guild and serve Grid filled them.

The guardian of the south gate didn't have a distinctive feature. He was armed with light chain armor and a sword, while his name was plainly 'Vin.' He didn't seem to have the particular strength to be one of the Demon King's four heavenly kings.

“Well, he doesn't need to be that strong.”

The four heavenly kings were a process. They needed to be defeated in order to reach the Demon King. Unless the S.A Group was crazy and wanted to throw away the Demon King subjugation event, the players needed to be able to reach the Demon King.

This meant the abilities of the four heavenly kings weren't as absolute as the Demon King. The Group C players thought this and were as relaxed as possible. Their source of confidence were the high rankers. Zibal who got first in PvP, Zhang Jian and Liao Wei who were China's rising stars, Bubab of Turkey, Seuron of Argentina, and other top ranked players were also in Group C.

The players judged that they wouldn't be able to get a high score in the heavenly kings stage as long as these rankers were present. Of course, they were confident in their own abilities. In this relaxed atmosphere, someone said, "Using a one-handed sword without holding a shield means he is focused on swordsmanship. He will move quickly. Be careful."

It was Mei Xiao of China. She used the strange moving whip and cloth that had tormented the Hero Grid for five minutes. Mei Xiao had spoken in a tense voice, and the mood dropped sharply. Liao Wei scoffed at Mei Xiao, “Aren’t you overestimating the opponent? Will you directly kneel and surrender instead of fighting? Just like your brother?”

Next was Zhang Jian. “Why are you bragging about common sense? Do you want to be an elitist or do you think everyone except for you are fools?”

The atmosphere calmed down even more. This was an event with three medals at stake. Instead of relying on each other, three players from the same country were arguing...?

“Scum.” Zibal blatantly laughed at them. Zhang Jian and Liao Wei were upset, but they couldn’t say anything. Zibal was a one-digit ranker. He had once been second place and was a monster who had been close to the peak. The highly anticipated Chinese stars were reluctant to

clash with him. It was better to pretend not to hear anything.

Zibal said to Mei Xiao, “That guy, he is wearing armor like a knight but he has leather shoes. Maybe he will be so fast that it is hard to see. Binding him is the key. Got it?”

Mei Xiao’s whip and cloth had moved like living things to constrain the Hero’s behavior. They didn’t move on their own like Grid’s golden hands. Mei Xiao controlled them directly, but their movements were smooth and detailed. It wasn’t surprising that Zibal had decided to rely on Mei Xiao.

Feeling touched, Mei Xiao responded vigorously, “Yes! I’ll try my best to tie up his feet!”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

‘Tch!’ Zhang Jian and Liao Wei were unhappy with the situation. Now Mei Xiao was acknowledged by the

person who would be the hero next year while billions of Chinese people were watching. Zhang Jian and Liao Wei collapsed when they realized that Mei Xiao's ability was above them. There was a rush of jealousy at the sight of the glowing Mei Xiao. While they were feeling anxious, someone approached. "Are you going to keep whining like this or will you act as folding screens?"

"Folding screens! Ah!"

Who would dare say this to them? Zhang Jian and Liao Wei frowned and turned around, only to hurriedly suppress the curses that were about to emerge. The person who came and whispered to them was Seuron of Argentina. Seuron set fire to their hearts. "Do you know that the person who starts the fight will be praised for their bravery? Originally, I was going to do it, but I am willing to concede because I feel sorry for you. How about it?"

"..." Zhang Jian and Liao Wei then turned to look at Vin standing silently before the gate. He was a very cocky

guy, who was folding his arms despite facing 100 enemies.

Seuron tempted the two men to attack the defenseless opponent. “The viewers will be contemptuous about that guy’s attitude. They will be enthusiastic about the person who hits him first.”

“ ... ”

“Huh? Then are you giving up? Okay, then I...”

“No!” As Seuron stepped forward, the nervous Zhang Jian and Liao Wei pulled out their weapons. “Leave it to us!”

They didn’t wait for an answer. The two men were already flying forward. Zhang Jian’s spear and Liao Wei’s long sickle aimed at Vin. The attack range was so long that they struck from 2 meters away while Vin still had his arms folded. It was a successful start to the battle.

However, in less than one second, Zhang Jian and Liao Wei realized that they were mistaken. It was a swordsmanship that transcended Peak Sword's speed. Just before Zhang Jian's spear and Liao Wei's sickle cut at Vin, his sword emerged from the sheath and cut their hearts and neck.

“Cough...!”

“Oh~ this is a bit greater than expected?”

Seuron's whistle entered the ears of Zhang Jian and Liao Wei. They realized they had been taken advantage of and quickly decided to escape from this crisis. Yet before they could move, Vin's sword cut at their body once again. There seemed to be cold flames burning at their wounds, worsening their injuries and killing them. Seuron smiled at the sight. It was an evil grin reminiscent of a great demon.

“I have received usable souls.”

“Oh, what the hell is this?”

“He isn’t a priest. Why does a Demon King’s servant have healing abilities?”

Group D that was responsible for the north gate. Just a moment ago, Group D had been full of confidence. It was because Jishuka, Damian, Katz, and Haster belonged to Group D.

Jishuka had overwhelming physical attacks, long-range damage dealing skills, and wide-area healing. Damian combined his buffs and healing ability with the light attribute attacks and tanking power. Katz used blood to give powerful debuffs to the enemy while giving himself an endless blood-sucking ability. There was also Haster, who had once been considered as the emperor of the gaming world.

On the raid stage, they were probably stronger than

Group A, which contained Kraugel, Chris, Pon, and Regas. Furthermore, the name of the north gate's guardian was Kobold. It was a name reminiscent of the monsters classified as the weakest mobs, along with the orcs, gnolls, and goblins.

Thus, Group D thought they could easily break through the gate. However, once they opened the lid, they found that things were completely different. The masked 'Kobold' was very strong, unlike his name. Not only did he bombard Group D with all types of wide-range spells, but he also boasted a high level of defense that meant he didn't receive much damage from Jishuka's arrows or Damian's attacks. The biggest problem was his healing ability. No matter how much damage Group D dealt with Damian's buff magic, Kobold recovered quickly. He looked like a zombie to Katz.

"This is funny..."

How many times had he been stimulated during the process of clashing with Kobold? Katz' madness, which

had been sealed for a long time after joining the Overgeared Kingdom, started to wriggle.

“Bloody Sky.”

The blood that the members of Group D shed... It had soaked the ground like rainwater, and now it soared into the sky.

“He is a great guy.” Chris could only laugh. It was a situation where players from all countries gathered together, including Canada, Korea, Britain, Japan, and China. Meanwhile, the three American rankers had split into separate groups. This was an expression of their confidence. They would move individually and secure three medals each, aiming for gold instead of silver and bronze medals. The participants of other countries chose to work in groups of three because they could cooperate in order to win one medal.

“Grid would’ve been like me,” Kraugel stated.

This caused Chris to shrug. “Well, there is no need to talk about him.”

If Grid were here, everybody apart from his group might pray that he failed to attack the gate. He would probably monopolize all four gates alone.

“Anyway, let’s do well.” Chris extended his hand for a handshake with Kraugel, while the other players comforted themselves.

How high was Kraugel’s status? He was a person who ignored hundreds of players asking for his autograph, let alone a handshake? It was impossible. Everyone thought this, but Kraugel unexpectedly responded to the handshake. Chris was Grid’s colleague and a great person who deserved respect for his achievements and talents.

“Yes. We might’ve chosen the worst enemy, so we should be nervous.”

“The worst enemy?”

Was there a difference in strength even in the four heavenly kings? If so, how could Kraugel distinguish it? Feeling confused, Chris turned his attention toward the gate. The guardian, who looked somewhat easy-going, was wearing a hat that covered his face. It was a hat that elders liked to wear.

“...Is he really the worst enemy? Are you sure?”

“Unfortunately, yes,” Kraugel confirmed as he looked at the environment spread around the gate. It was a mudflat, and it looked good for farming and harvesting seafood.

In the Demon King’s castle beyond the gates, Grid was still free from the cameras and he devoted himself to smelting. The golden mineral pavranium was flowing from the portable furnace. He had melted the myth-rated

item, Blade Aiming at the Gods.

The National Competition's server was separate from the game. Thus, it wouldn't affect him if he destroyed an item here.

“This is enough.” Grid finished smelting the pavranium and used Legendary Blacksmith's Creation.

[What item do you want to create?]

“A cannon.”

The basics of defending was wide area firepower. What if it was an automatic firing cannon? Every time the cooldown ended, Grid grinned viciously and used the Alarm spell. Even the evil smile Seuron wore as he sacrificed his group members couldn't be compared to Grid's smile.

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Chapter 952

The National Competition's server was handled separately from the game server. The items and character information that were changed in the National Competition server didn't affect the main server. This was one of the newly applied rules for the 4th National Competition.

Most players welcomed this rule with open arms. They witnessed the pain and anger of players who lost their items in the last National Competition and were severely hurt. It was natural to welcome the new rule since it was a safeguard to prevent more victims.

Then the Demon King's subjugation started. The players realized why the new rule was applied.

[The Durnehild Shield has lost all durability and has been destroyed!]

[Destroyed items will automatically be restored once the

gate is breached.]

“Kuek...!”

20 minutes after the start of the Demon King subjugation event, this sound resonated from the north, south, east, and west gates. The rankers, who were armed with unique or legendary items just 20 minutes ago, now looked like they were wearing rags.

That’s right. This was why the S.A Group separated the National Competition server from the game server. It was purely to protect the rights of the players. This was to show consideration for the players who would lose everything to the mighty four heavenly kings. It was an internal arrangement after deciding that Grid would play the Demon King.

“Cough, cough! No way...!”

At the west gate, the German representative—Weldon—was pale as he coughed up blood. He was a veteran who

participated in numerous raids, but he hardly ever experienced his shield being destroyed. The only occasions where his shield had been destroyed was when the raid had lasted for more than eight hours. Yet the knight called Benz broke Weldon's shield in just 20 minutes. Additionally, Weldon wasn't the only tanker present. Weldon was one of 20 tankers, and Benz' attacks had only hit him 15 times. This meant the Lv. 8 High-grade Shield skill and his unique shield had lost all their durability in only 15 hits.

Weldon chose to be a defensive player instead of an evasive player. This fact meant that Benz' attack power was reminiscent of Overgeared King Grid of last year. No, it was obviously above Grid's.

"There are the four heavenly kings and then the Demon King... How do we clear this?" Weldon lost his fighting spirit and expressed his despair. They were words that could reduce the entire team's morale, but no one blamed Weldon. It was because most of Group B understood Weldon's feelings or felt the same way.

However, the other half was still calm. They weren't weak-minded enough to be swayed by Weldon's hasty remark or stupid enough to make this 20-minute battle meaningless. After analyzing Benz throughout the battle, they had a good understanding of her attack patterns and characteristics.

‘It isn't a style that spams many skills. First, she only uses a skill after creating a gap with a basic attack.’

‘The wide-area attacks aren't a big threat. It can unleash enough firepower to kill people, but it is strictly limited to a single group.’

‘Her defense is high, but she has no healing ability. The biggest problem...’

‘...The lower her health, the higher the attack power.’

‘She is a berserker.’

The west gate's guardian Benz...

Her real name was Mercedes. As Grid's knight and a legendary knight, she was armed with the Hero King's Armor—a myth-rated armor made by Grid. The greatest strength of the Hero King's Armor was the option of increasing attack power every time she was hit.

However, the players didn't know Benz' identity or her armor's options. The players analyzed that Benz got stronger as her health declined due to her berserker class.

“Berserkers have a fatal weakness. In exchange for increasing attack power, their defense is lowered. If we aim for the right timing, it can be a fatal wound.”

“Everyone, save your ultimate skills. Once the target's health falls below a certain level, we will unleash a full offensive.”

Group B had 59 survivors. 41 players had died in just 20 minutes. They were the strongest people representing their countries, and they didn't die easily. Every time

they hit Benz, the damage accumulated, and her health was now far below 70%.

‘Just a little bit more.’

‘Once her health is at 30%... No, it will be decided the moment it reaches 40%.’

Group B blocked Benz while gathering near Eat Spicy Jokbal. It was because Eat Spicy Jokbal could make an instant dungeon and change the structure to be advantageous to his allies. As they got closer to Eat Spicy Jokbal, the terrain became more favorable and they would receive a small number of buffs.

Coke stood between the towering barriers and pulled out a shield and chains. He discarded attack power and focused on defense and CC. “I will play the role of the tanker until the dungeon is completed.”

“Can you handle it?”

“Everyone here is excellent... There is also Teacher Peak

Sword. I can hold on.”

“Okay, I will focus on completing the dungeon.”

Eat Spicy Jokbal trusted Coke. Who could he trust if he didn't trust the talented person recognized by Grid and the 10 meritorious retainers? Eat Spicy Jokbal believed that Coke would endure well. It was as he expected. Coke used the chains and shield to neutralize Benz' attacks. He blocked Benz' sword and gave his teammates a chance to hit her.

Five minutes passed by. For a whole five minutes, Coke endured Benz' aggro alone. Of course, it was due to the help of his teammates. The heals of the priests and the buffs of the paladins were concentrated on Coke, while the magicians bombarded Benz with spells. It seemed like two people fighting one-on-one in a narrow passage, but this was definitely a 59-against-1 fight.

However, Coke quickly became nervous. Engaging with a higher level opponent brought about a sudden drop in

stamina. It would be dangerous if he didn't manage it properly. Additionally, the shock that was transmitted every time Benz hit his shield was too great. As Benz' health decreased and attack power increased, the priests healing Coke couldn't keep up.

“Coke!”

It was a breathtaking moment. Coke heard his name being called from behind and reflexively bent over. A red line was drawn above him. It was Iyarugt, which had been charged to 70% magic power in Iyarugt's Sheath and entered the Excited State. Benz' chest was stabbed, and she collapsed for the first time since the battle began. Her health gauge fell to 40% as she staggered. At this moment...

“...Sweet.”

Due to his excited state, Iyarugt appeared in reality. The elderly horned demonkin enjoyed the air in his lungs as he looked at Mercedes. He was the strongest swordsman

of hell who fought with great demons. Despite his weakened state, his senses were still sharp and he judged that Benz was strong. Thus, he didn't have time to savor the sweet air and swung his sword.

“Great Mountain Lineage.” Mercedes used White Tiger's Attitude under a different name. This was a skill attached to the World Crushing Sword of the Noble White Tiger. Benz unleashed all types of attacks.

Coke swapped to his sword instead of the chains, and he used his ultimate skill along with the rest of Group B. They were aiming for the fact that a berserker's defense was reduced every time their health fell. This decision was a mistake. After all, Benz wasn't a berserker. It was due to an item that she increased her attack power every time she lost health, and she didn't receive the penalty of lower defense because she wasn't a berserker. No, she was now in a state with higher defense. White Tiger's Attitude was a skill that increased defense by 198% in exchange for an 80% drop in attack power.

“What...?”

“T-This is ridiculous!”

The result was far below Group B’s expectations. Benz used Noble Valor and Knight’s Resolution to raise her defense to the extreme and still had 20% health left, despite being hit by the ranker’s ultimate skills. Benz’ armor was surrounded by a purple and red aura.

Everyone was overwhelmed by the energy that reminded them of Grid’s fighting energy.

The bandage covering Benz’ eyes crumbled and was completely peeled off. The deep eyes that seemed to contain the universe looked at the source of Group B’s power, including Iyarugt.

[The West Gate Guardian Benz’ deep eyes are looking at you.]

[Some of your stats and skills are forcibly revealed to the West Gate Guardian Benz.]

[You can't resist.]

[The West Gate Guardian Benz' sharp sword energy threatens you. The strong pressure is causing your body and mind to shrink back. All speeds are reduced by 30%, and skill casting speed is reduced by 20%.]

[You can't resist.]

The restriction that fell on them was too powerful. The players were unable to lift the restrictions that appeared at the critical moment. Then a pair of wings emerged from Mercedes' back. The incomplete fighting energy accumulated in Benz' armor, and she was able to demonstrate an ultimate attack power as she cut down Iyarugt first.

‘This...!’

‘Grid's....!’

Only two people... The Overgeared members—Coke and

Peak Sword—were familiar with Grid, and they realized Benz' identity. She was the legendary knight, Mercedes. Peak Sword and Coke realized the weight of this name and sensed something. It would be impossible to get through the four heavenly kings and the Demon King.

Everyone started to turn to gray before Benz' bombardment as she emitted a black (the original was silver) magic power. Two kills with one blow. 10 kills per seconds...

This was a state when all the players' ultimate techniques were on cooldown. They had just exhausted their strength and couldn't handle this. Even the dungeon that Eat Spicy Jokbal took time in creating couldn't survive for long and collapsed.

[Group B, that was in charge of attacking the west gate, has been wiped out.]

[The West Gate Guardian has received a great deal of damage. It is recommended to attack her before she completely recovers.]

The same notification windows appeared in front of the players of Group A, C, and D.

“...” Everyone’s expressions distorted. Those players of Group B... They were wiped out after 30 minutes of fighting? There was no one who criticized or blamed them. The still surviving members of Groups A, C, and D were all shocked by the strength of the four heavenly kings. They were forced to think that Group B was wiped out because the opponent was too strong, not because the players were weak or made a mistake at a critical moment.

However, the spectators and viewers saw it differently.

“Group B is too weak.”

“It is the only group without an American ranker. There

aren't many Overgeared members or Damian present.”

“I feel sorry for the Koreans. This was a good chance to take away medals from other countries.”

“You feel sorry for them? How many more articles should there be about a small country?”

“Mei Xiao, have strength! If you win a gold medal, you will become a hero of the people... Huh?”

The Chinese spectators who were shouting excitedly all fell silent. Mei Xiao belonged to Group C. Group C was believed to have incomparable firepower because it contained Zibal who won PvP and Soul Predator Seuron.

[Group C, that was in charge of attacking the south gate, has been wiped out.]

[The South Gate Guardian has received a great deal of damage. It is recommended to attack him before he completely recovers.]

They were wiped out like Group B. It was the same for Damian, Katz, and Jishuka in Group D.

[Group D, that was in charge of attacking the north gate, has been wiped out.]

[The North Gate Guardian has received a great deal of damage. It is recommended to attack him before he completely recovers.]

“No, what is this...!”

The shocked spectators and viewers turned their attention to the last remaining group. Kraugel was being beaten by a rain of seafood. Small shells exploded simultaneously and fired sharp shell pieces, sealing Kraugel's movements. Then crab claws pinched Kraugel's Achilles' heels. The 1st ranked Chris was struggling while trapped in fishnets, and Regas and Pon were rolling around on the mudflat like it was a Mud Festival.

“ ... ”

Would they not be able to even see the Demon King?
Everyone in the world was overwhelmed with anxiety.
The only exception was Grid. He was merely hammering
silently.

Chapter 953

[Benz (Mercedes), the foolish and loyal knight, has defeated all invaders. The compensation will be paid after the competition.]

[Vin (Asmophel), the always-second villain who betrayed his companions and gained a heart demon, has defeated all invaders. The compensation will be paid after the competition.]

[Kobold (Noll), the vampire earl who craves praise and affection, has repelled all invaders. The compensation will be paid after the competition.]

The features of the four heavenly kings described by the system made Grid laugh. It was both interesting and bitter that their individual tendencies were expressed realistically.

‘If I think about Asmophel, I need to resolve the matter with the empress soon...’

Thus, Grid needed to be stronger. He had gotten revenge previously by using Muto and the insane dragon iron, but that was only on the level of child's play. In order to completely get rid of past debts, he needed force. Grid hit the iron on the anvil with Item Auto Production while waiting for the last notification window.

Although Grid couldn't say that Piaro was the strongest among the four heavenly kings, Piaro was the person he trusted the most. Piaro was the last remaining heavenly king. Perhaps the last remaining group that Grid was waiting to be destroyed was Kraugel's group.

Did Grid hope that the players wouldn't reach the Demon King? No, he didn't have that type of mindset. In fact, Grid was hoping for players to break through the four heavenly kings. If he fought with them directly and defeated them, he could get more rewards and create the flow that the chairman of the Daejin Group wanted.

'The players must suffer before breaking through the four heavenly kings.'

Grid was the only player who knew all the hidden rules of the Demon King subjugation event. He knew that once every group was wiped out in the four heavenly kings stage, they would have the opportunity to resurrect and re-challenge. That's why he was calm.

‘In the end, they will come all the way here.’

The Demon King subjugation event was this type of game from the beginning. There were legendary NPCs with an average level of 450. It was realistically difficult for players to raid them at the current time. No, it might've been easy originally, but it became difficult once Grid armed them.

Grid made this happen. He didn't want to see his knights collapse in front of so many people. He wanted to let people know that his knights were strong.

Ttang!

The cannon's barrel was completed. It was 40 minutes

after the start of the event.

[The Demon King's perk has increased maximum health by 200,000. To date, the total amount of health added is 800,000.]

[Cardin (Piaro), the explorer who was enlightened after glimpsing the universe in a small seed, has defeated all the invaders. The compensation will be paid after the competition.]

“Summoning the Reputation Store.”

[A special service for only the best celebrities!]

A golden carriage fell in front of Grid.

“Waterspout.”

The seawater, mud, all types of fish, and shellfish flew up from the mudflat and formed a giant vortex. It twisted

like a rising dragon's waist and looked threatening. Containing an intensive hardness, the vortex was a purely man-made disaster. The moment he realized this, Kraugel was reminded of a nightmare of being crushed to death. It was from the farmer who had blown away one of Great Demon Belial's arms. The waterspout in front of him had a different sharp, but it contained a similar energy.

“This waterspout...!” The players screamed as the waterspout rose into the sky and then fell. No, they swore. They were going crazy because they were harassed by bizarre skills such as Flying Pebbles, Clam Digging, Crab Fishing, Drawing Octopus, Calling Seagulls, and Water Sediment. Now they were going to be crushed by a vortex of mud and seafood?

It was more dirty than frightening. As the world watched, they removed the octopus clinging to their faces. They were also pulled down into the mudflat, scratched by scallops and crabs, and bitten by the beaks of the flying seagulls. It wasn't a glorious fight.

“This XX fisherman...! Uwaah!”

The players were so caught up in their rage that they forgot about the watching crowd as they released their defensive skills. The vortex that fell from the sky crushed the players’ bodies. The heavy weight of the vortex made all their defensive skills meaningless.

“ ... ”

There were only two people who survived on the silent mudflat—Kraugel and Chris.

“...He is the person I know, right?”

The heavenly king called Cardin...

It happened when he used Plankton Sprinkling to make all the shellfish in the area grow rapidly. Chris got a vague idea of Cardin’s identity. Of course, he didn’t admit it until the waterspout was used. Kraugel didn’t deny it. “You are right.”

“...Then the Demon King?”

“Can’t you guess?”

“...How can we win?” Chris became frustrated once he realized the identities of the four heavenly kings and the Demon King. It was an incredible attitude. He was more afraid of Grid than the fisherman in front of him.

“Retrieve Fishing Nets. Shoot Ink.”

The fisherman grabbed two squids from the fishing nets flying through the mudflat and shot them like guns. It was precisely aimed at the eyes, so Kraugel and Chris lost their vision.

“Threading Bait.”

The fisherman flew like a ray of light, caught Chris, and pulled. Then he used the rebound to fly to Kraugel and stab him with a spade.

“Breaking the Shell.”

Originally, it was a fraudulent skill with the name Fated to Perish. Kraugel was troubled during this 0.1-second gap. Should he pull out Quick Command?

‘No, give up.’

This wasn’t an opponent he could win against even when mobilizing all the numbers. Group A was already wiped out. Kraugel looked at the circumstances and was convinced.

‘We will be given a chance to re-challenge.’

After five seconds of immortality where he didn’t resist, he died and soon realized that he was correct.

[Group A, that was in charge of attacking the east gate, has been wiped out.]

[The East Gate Guardian has received a great deal of damage. It is recommended to attack him before he completely recovers.]

[All challengers are tasting frustration before the mighty power of the four heavenly kings!]

[The first challenge has failed.]

[The second challenge will begin. All challengers are resurrected.]

[The health of the four heavenly kings is completely restored. However, their skill cooldown isn't restored, and their stats will drop by 30%.]

[If the second challenge fails, the bronze medal rewards will be removed from the gold, silver, and bronze medal rewards.]

7. If the participants fail to break through the gates, the S.A Group might give the right to challenge again to the participants. The method should be discussed with Shin Youngwoo.

This was the 7th clause of the agreement signed between the S.A Group and Grid. The clause had been created due to insecurity and fear about the strength of the four heavenly kings.

“This is what ended up happening.” Chairman Lim Cheolho laughed after confirming that the rankers failed the first challenge. In fact, it was an unexpected result during the early planning stages of the Demon King project. The named NPCs that Grid had been collecting in the last few years were strong, but it wasn’t possible for them to face 100 rankers alone. However, there were variables—the growth of the NPCs and Grid’s ability to make items.

Grid was truly unusual. Other players would bind the named NPCs closer to them and treat them as pets. Meanwhile, Grid gave them freedom. The current situation was the result.

Piario could do as much field work as he wanted.

Asmophel went looking for the remaining Red Knights to take responsibility for his sins. Mercedes was working individually and gaining insights every time Grid was gone. Noll managed the vampire city while controlling his hunger with Piaro's help.

All of them had grown beyond their predicted ranges. Additionally, Grid had improved his blacksmithing skills, so his legendary and myth rated items turned the four heavenly kings into monsters in just a few months. Wasn't it unbelievable that 400 rankers couldn't break through one of the four heavenly kings?

"Was it intentional?" Director Yoon Sangmin asked because he was baffled by the unexpected results. He had a very cautious attitude. "Did Grid thoroughly analyze their tendencies and past, raising them as efficiently as possible in order to bring out the potential of the NPCs to the extreme?"

If so, Grid absolutely wasn't a fool. He was a genius whose previous actions were all an act. Lim Cheolho

shook his head. “It isn’t what he intended.”

“...” Yoon Sangmin also watched the Five Miracles like Chairman Lim Cheolho. The initial animosity toward Grid faded as he watched Grid. That’s why he was well aware. Grid was a man who didn’t calculate things. No, he only calculated after doing things. At least, until last year.

“Grid’s intellectual development is rising, but the way he fostered the four heavenly kings isn’t something obtained from knowledge. It is possible because of his pure heart.”

“Heart...” It was a word that didn’t seem to fit when talking about Grid. Yoon Sangmin leaned back in his chair and laughed pleasantly. “I think I know why you and the development team like Grid so much.”

“I can’t dislike him. Grid is a person who respected our children (NPCs) from the beginning.”

“You must feel sorry.”

“What do you mean?”

“Grid (Demon King) will be defeated.”

The first challenge ended in 40 minutes. The second challenge against the weakened four heavenly kings was likely to end much sooner. The maximum amount of time given to Grid was one and a half hours, which meant his health couldn't exceed two million.

Realistically, it would be difficult to make items.

Chairman Lim Cheolho laughed at Yoon Sangmin's concern. “You were the one who wrote the contract with Grid, but you haven't really felt his change. An hour and a half? That is enough time for the current Grid.”

Then he asserted, “A thoroughly prepared Grid is no weaker than the four heavenly kings. He won't be easily defeated.”

Today, Grid would become the ideal of players and a source of passion.

Chapter 954

Time was given to the participants of the Demon King subjugation event to have a meeting.

They were given 20 minutes. This period of time was not allowed for the four heavenly kings. The cooldown time of the four heavenly kings was frozen in place for 20 minutes. Of course, this time didn't apply to Grid either. Grid's accumulated health buff and blacksmithing work also stopped.

“We should have players from the top 20 countries like China, the United States, and Canada all in one team.” This was the opinion of China's Zhang Jian. “We wanted to secure a few more medals, so the strong people of each country were divided between different teams. It is right to concentrate strength in one team instead of dispersing it.”

“You want to discard the other three teams?”

“Yes, one team can break through the four heavenly kings. Isn’t that the surest way? The players of the other three teams... They will have a chance to win a medal when meeting the Demon King.”

This meeting scene was being broadcasted around the world in real time. The attention and focus of the world were still on the Demon King subjugation event, and many broadcasters were updating their ratings.

Zhang Jian didn’t seem to care. He expressed his cold opinion like he didn’t care about people from other countries swearing at him. However, his opinion had a deadly blind spot.

“If we proceed using this plan, shouldn’t we exclude China from the top team? Aren’t you guys really weak? The cute guys who dropped out first actually want a free bus ride?” That’s right. In the words of Argentina’s representative Seuron, China wasn’t ‘qualified.’

After all, two of the three Chinese representatives had

been killed the moment the battle began.

“It’s because of you...!” Zhang Jian’s face was red hot, and he tried to refute it.

However, Peak Sword interrupted, “The bad Chinese person should stay quiet. I want to keep the existing teams.”

“What? Bad Chinese? What does that mean?” Zhang Jian was dimly aware of how foreigners divided between good and bad Chinese people.

Zhang Jian trembled from the racial insult, but Peak Sword was a professional. The president of the Patriotic Association was familiar with how to deal with arrogant Chinese and Japanese people. Zhang Jian already lost public sentiment, so Peak Sword openly ignored him and asked for the opinions of the other rankers, “What is your opinion?”

People who liked intimidating the weak would just

become cowards in front of a person better than himself.
It was as expected.

“...” Zhang Jian shut his mouth the moment he gave the right to speak to strong people like Kraugel, Chris, and Zibal. He stepped back without further argument. Chris and Zibal agreed with Peak Sword’s opinion.

“It should naturally be like this. We have already fought the opponent once, so next time will be easier.”

All 400 players gathered here had the stats and talent of a ranker. They would be able to double their combat ability when fighting against an opponent they already collected data on. Kraugel was thinking the same thing.
“Go with your plan.”

“Okay.”

Grid wasn’t present, so Kraugel was the standard that everyone acknowledged. Once he agreed to the plan, no one opposed him. The 400 members joined their original

groups and gathered in front of the gates they already failed to capture once.

“Everybody should already know...? The opponent is weaker. Her stats have dropped by 30%, but it doesn’t change the fact that if certain skills are allowed, we will die in one blow.” At the west gate, Peak Sword led Group B and cautioned his team members. “Think of the opponent as God Grid. Don’t be hit by strong skills.”

“ ... ”

“We fought her for 30 minutes. Don’t you know most of the attack patterns? Everybody can do it. Use defense piercing skills once the opponent uses a skill... Ah, Magician Goshar.”

“Eh?”

“Don’t think about your form when fighting.”

The Overgeared Guild had two top magicians. They were the wind magician Zednos and fire magician Laella. They

always said to the magicians of the Overgeared Guild that ‘magicians must fight ugly.’ This meant they had to chant magic spells quickly. Believing in continuous spells like a shield and standing in place to cast spells faster was tantamount to suicide.

As a magician, Goshar naturally knew this. “You are asking me to run around and sweat? Oh, that doesn’t make me feel good.”

The biggest advantage of a magician was ‘coolness.’ Unlike normal combat classes, magicians were the flower of the battlefield who stood in one place and massacred the enemies with their spells. People who selected the magician class in Satisfy were those who lived and died for their form. They were reluctant to show their sweating and ugly appearance when people all over the world were watching. Still, what could they do?

“Well, it can’t be helped if we want to win.”

“I have to win a medal.”

The magicians muttered.

Goshar had pride as a magician. It was foolish to hold onto his pride when the opponent was the strongest boss he encountered so far. At first, his judgment was blurred because he hadn't expected the opponent to be so strong, but not anymore.

"I will do it properly." Goshar made up his mind.

Then he reached out a hand to Peak Sword, who shook it. "Yes, let's win."

They had to succeed in the second challenge. Since the third challenge would remove the bronze medal compensation, the players' motivation would drop, leading to a decrease in attack power. The determined players rushed toward the four heavenly kings.

Over at Group D, Jishuka burned with fighting spirit

once she discovered the guardian of the north gate.

“This time, I won’t be deceived by your appearance,” Jishuka growled with wild eyes, looking beautiful. The ferocious expression combined with her intense impression exuded a fatal charm. She was like a poisonous apple. However, only one man could poison himself.

“Hey, Damian. Give a blessing to my arrows.”

Kobold—the vampire earl Noll—had something in common with Euphemina. He was a conditional powerhouse. If certain conditions like his satiety and number of allies were met, Noll would be much stronger than Piaro or Mercedes. However, Noll was currently alone. His survival ability was still the best, but in terms of firepower, he was weaker than the other heavenly kings.

In other words, Group D had a chance to win even in the first challenge. They would’ve won if Jishuka hadn’t

acted as a supporter and stayed faithful to the role of damage dealer. If only Damian hadn't focused on wide-area healing and buffed the attack power of Jishuka, Katz, and Haster, Noll's strength would've collapsed faster than expected and Group D alone would've broken through the gate in the first challenge.

In the first place, Group D contained the most raid-focused people, so it was normal. However, Group D became passive against Noll's wide-area magic, and that was the result. Well, it was a normal thing. It was a rule that the original challenge was always the hardest part of a raid. The probability that a raid would be successful when they didn't know the characteristics and patterns of the boss was very low.

Groups A, B, and C also narrowly missed the boss raid. Group A discovered the method to neutralize the mudflat that enhanced Piaro's power too late, Group B mistook Mercedes as a berserker, and Group C suffered too much from Asmophel's sword in the early stages.

“I understand. I will give you a buff every time you pull out an arrow.” Instead of the middle row where he was responsible for wide-area buffs and healing, Damian took a rear position this time.

His buffs were concentrated on some of the high rankers like Jishuka, Katz, and Haster. In particular, Jishuka gained an attack buff on her arrows, which were classified as an auxiliary weapon, and her bow. Jishuka aimed precisely at Noll, who was wearing the kobold mask, and fired five arrows. The arrows disappeared into the darkness of the night.

“I’m sorry, Noll. I don’t think I can send you off comfortably because you are too strong.”

----!

Five arrows were fired silently. A person with the ability to read the trajectory didn’t exist among the players. Even Kraugel’s Super Sensitivity relied on things such as ‘sight’ and ‘sound.’ However, Jishuka’s arrows didn’t

contain these things.

One arrow hit Noll in the forehead, one in the foot, another in the other foot...

A total of five arrows struck Noll with almost no time difference. Noll's head shot back, and blood sprinkled down like rain.

“The battle has commenced.” Jishuka's alluring voice boosted Group D's morale.

The second clash between the 400 players and the four heavenly kings was greatly different from the first challenge. The attacks of the players threatened the four heavenly kings while the hit rate of the four heavenly kings fell greatly. In particular, each group could immediately detect the signs of the wide-area skills.

“They really are rankers.”

“Yes. I didn’t know it could be like this.”

The spectators and viewers were stunned. They had to admire the rankers’ analytical skills and co-operation several times. The four heavenly kings weren’t losing just because their stats had fallen by 30%. In the second challenge, their skills and characteristics were being targeted.

Vin’s quick sword, which seemed like a video playing at double speed, stopped due to the interference of Group C’s cooperation.

Kobold, who kept recovering his health like an endless spring, became tired from the bombardment of Jishuka’s arrows.

Benz’ stamina was worn down by the magicians who ran around and cast spells at her.

The four heavenly kings tried to use their secret techniques, but the players could now read the timing.

They used skills that ignored defense to quickly exhaust the health gauges of the four heavenly kings. In the first place, it was a 100 against 1 fight. With 100 people aiming at one person, at least one in ten would hit even if most of them missed. The four heavenly kings had limited health and couldn't cope with the damage forever.

In particular, the attack power of the representatives of each group like Kraugel, Chris, Zibal, Peak Sword, Jishuka, and Haster was a threat to the four heavenly kings. In the end...

[Kobold of the North Gate has fallen.]

[Group D has succeeded in attacking the North Gate.]

[The top contributor to the attack on the North Gate is Brazil's representative, Jishuka!]

[The second place contributor to the attack on the North Gate is Japan's representative, Damian!]

[The third place contributor to the attack on the North Gate is Japan's representative, Katz!]

The first victory occurred 37 minutes after the battle commenced.

“Waaaaahhhhh!” The excited spectators and viewers cheered enthusiastically at the performance. They witnessed the skills of the rankers in real time and naturally expected the end of the Demon King. It was hard to imagine that he could deal with 400 rankers alone, no matter how majestic he was in his two appearances.

“Go! Jishuka!”

“Kraugel! Kraugel! Kraugel!”

“Peak Sword is so cool!”

“I want a magic machine!”

Forgetting about race and nationality, all the spectators

and viewers united as one. It was the first time this occurred in the National Competition. The Demon King had become the enemy of all humanity.

Chapter 955

[The North Gate Guardian has fallen.]

[The scattered gray soul is saying sorry to you.]

[The North Gate has been breached! The momentum of the invaders is soaring into the sky!]

“...This is unexpected.” Grid was surprised as he purchased the necessary materials from the Reputation Store. He wasn’t surprised that the first gate was breached in 37 minutes. This timing was similar to Grid’s expectations. Rather, he was surprised that the North Gate, which was protected by Noll, was the first to be broken.

‘I didn’t know Noll would be the first to lose.’

Prior to the National Competition, Grid had made the Valhalla of Strong Trust for Noll. The myth rated armor based on Valhalla of Infinite Affection had the effect of

increasing health recovery, reducing the damage received and acquiring additional defense (maximum of 100) when facing multiple opponents. He could be called the strongest tanker among the four heavenly kings, yet he was the first to fall.

‘This is despite the title effect...’

Noll would unconditionally try to escape if health fell below 10%. Even Noll’s powerful survival instinct wasn’t enough. Honestly shocked that Noll was the first to be defeated, Grid was forced to think about a variety of cases.

“Magic Missile.” Once the cooldown of Alarm ended, Grid took out Belial’s wand and set the time of the spell.

“...Immobile Fortress became a poison.”

The passive skill attached to Valhalla of Strong Trust, Immobile Fortress. It reflected damage every time the armor durability fell by a certain amount and was a more

useful skill than Moving Fortress in certain circumstances. That said, it did have a fatal weakness that made it impossible for the wearer to move when it was used. This was likely the part that caught Noll's ankle.

‘Additionally, Jishuka and Damian are in the group that attacked the North Gate.’

Based on what Grid knew, there were few players who had an attack power high enough to pose a deadly threat to Noll. Among them, Jishuka was the only one capable of dealing ‘continuous’ high damage. If Damian had given her wings, Noll wouldn't have been able to hold on for long.

“Alarm. Magic Missile,” Grid once again set up the spells and then looked at an item from the Reputation Store. His heart wasn't affected by Noll's death. He didn't feel any interest in the words, ‘I'm sorry.’

This was conclusive proof that this Noll was a fake.

‘I’m sorry... The operating team doesn’t know Noll’s nature.’

Noll was still young and dependent. The real Noll would’ve felt resentment at the moment of death. Why hadn’t Grid come to help while he was suffering such shame and humiliation? Yes, the four heavenly kings only inherited the powers of their bodies and not their appearances or personalities. It would be a waste of his emotions to think about their pain and humiliation.

Grid kept thinking this as he controlled his heart.

“ ... ”

Still, it didn’t work. The unbearable anger was boiling up. Like a sticky liquid, it was hard to remove. It was anger toward himself. Noll’s death had arrived faster than expected. Grid got distracted when he thought that the cause of Noll’s death was the item he had made.

‘You jerk.’

Unlike the players, a NPC's life was finite. Grid respected them and cared for them. He vowed to give more than 10 of his lives for them.

‘I can't make only one item.’

The Noll he was worried about was currently guarding the vampire city. What if someone invaded the city? What if Noll trusted and relied on the armor that Grid made? If this was the poison that ended up hurting Noll...

“I also...” Grid trembled as he was reminded of Khan. His right hand, which was swinging the hammer, was white. Then a new notification window emerged.

[The South Gate Guardian has fallen into the moat.]

[The scattered gray soul melting in the water is saying sorry to you.]

[The South Gate has been breached! The roar of the

invaders has penetrated the battlefield!]

It was exactly nine minutes after the North Gate was broken. The second victim was Asmophel's clone, Vin. Grid wasn't shaken. This was a sin committed by the desire to be first. Asmophel's mind and body were tempered from confronting the sin he couldn't escape. These days, he practiced a swordsmanship that transcended the concept of time.

'It would be hard for him to deal with a large number of enemies alone.'

Compared to the other heavenly kings, Asmophel was incomplete. Unlike Piaro and Mercedes, he wasn't a legend. Nor had he been born with the highest pedigree like Noll. Asmophel's flames of his swordsmanship were a double-edged sword that melted even his own body. He had yet to reach the threshold of transcendence, and it would be difficult for him to cope with 100 rankers when his stats had fallen by 30%.

[The price of the selected item is 999 reputation points.
Do you want to buy it?]

The time between when he accepted the Demon King project and when the National Competition started—Grid had worked diligently in the three months given to him. He had spent time thinking around the clock as he worked hard to improve the odds. Not only had he carried out various quests and adventures while strengthening the equipment of the four heavenly kings, he had also studied how he could use his cards more efficiently.

One of them was the use of the Reputation Store. There were various types of products in the Reputation Store such as food, elixirs, skill reinforcements, magic scrolls, boxes containing various items, boxes containing pets, minerals, jewelry, ingredient boxes, and so on. Expectations were very high. They were products that guaranteed a minimum of performance or ratings in exchange for high prices.

First of all, Grid naturally planned to purchase the Sweet Candy, which raised all stats by 30%. The Sweet Candy only lasted five minutes, but he could buy up to five.

Thus, he would be able to maintain this top condition for 25 minutes. However, after thinking about it a bit more, he felt that this wasn't the best way.

The new product that Grid focused on was the cheapest item in the Reputation Store. It was the 999 reputation point random machine.

[Draw! Draw! Draw it!]

[The random drawing machine!]

If you spend 999 reputation points here, you can get a variety of items from the store at a random cheap price!

* Limited edition items aren't included.

* There is a certain probability of acquiring experience increase potions.

Price: 999 reputation points.]

The explanation that they could get various items sold at a random price was a trick. Grid was reminded of old memories. He had used the random machine to gain an experience buff potion, only to get the Pretty Hairpin and Most Delicious Skewers in the World.

Of the two items, the skewers couldn't be found in the sales list on the Reputation Store. It had come from the random machine. The past Grid hadn't questioned it. He had only felt angry that he had gotten a useless item.

‘Things are different now that I think about it again.’

Grid came to a conclusion after thinking about it. He concluded that the magical random machine could draw items sold in every shop in every corner of the world. Otherwise, the appearance of the skewers was nothing more than a bug, and there were no bugs in Satisfy. Only unkind tricks existed.

“Go.”

Even if his judgment was correct, wasn't the probability of drawing a good product extremely low? He thought it might be more stable to go with the candy and magic scrolls, but what was an adventure without risk? Grid didn't hesitate. He had a high good luck stat now. His good luck stat was a huge 631 points. It would be nice if he were renamed the King of Luck.

‘The Challenger Store on Fog Island sold a variety of elixirs, skills, and scrolls.’

Grid was convinced. There were many secret stores around the world that he didn't know about yet, and these stores might sell items beyond imagination.

‘It will be a super jackpot even if I only gain a few of them.’

First, Grid needed confirmation. In the real game, reputation points weren't something that could be easily

used. This was an opportunity to invest only in the random drawing machine. It would be a good experience. Even if the result of the drawing was ruined, all his other preparations were complete, so he could perform the role of the Demon King sufficiently.

Grid made up his mind and pressed the button.

[999 reputation points have been consumed to buy the ‘Draw! Draw! Draw it!’ item. You have 219,540 reputation points remaining.]

[...!!!]

[Your high good luck stat has brought about a positive result!]

[The Immediate Item Completion Scroll has been acquired!}

“...?”

Um, what was this? Did he see wrong? Grid was absent-

minded for a moment and doubled checked the result again.

“...Umm.”

It might be better to stop the drawing and buy the candy and other items. Grid ignored his earlier decision and thought this sincerely.

『 After a long struggle...! It was a really fierce struggle. Finally...!! 』

『 The 400 players have breached all four gates! 』

『 The cooperation between players that transcended nationality was very beautiful and inspiring. 』

『 Thanks to Satisfy, humanity is one! So cool! 』

The commentators of each country were excited, and people all over the world cheered. The 400 players' first

and second challenges which took a total of 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete had been fierce and beautiful. Their journey was an unforgettable sight that settled deep within the hearts of the world.

『 Now, only the Demon King is left! 』

『 Demon King... He is really strong. I couldn't imagine the Demon King falling after seeing him in his surprise appearance event. 』

『 Same here. However, it is different now. 』

『 Yes, our heroes now know how to work together. They are no longer rivals but companions who trust and rely on each other. 』

『 That's right! The 400 heroes can defeat the mighty Demon King! 』

The commentators couldn't suppress their excitement. In their eyes, the 400 players on stage were real heroes. The crowd present and the audience watching in front of the

screen were the same. The rankers—they were the handful of geniuses among the two billion players who many people envied and aspired to become.

People believed in the propaganda about the players and prayed that they would win. The Demon King was an artificial intelligence. They didn't want to see the players, who were representing their country, get defeated and were frustrated by the mere sight of monsters.

[Breaking through all the gates has opened the way to the Demon King's castle.]

Kraugel, Chris, Jishuka, Damian, Zibal, Haster, Peak Sword, and so on—the 400 players followed the most active representatives of their group and moved along the passage. There was a wide open door at the end of the passage. They passed the door and entered a great hall.

“ ... ”

No one was able to rush into the great hall. A music box

was being played from deep inside the dark great hall. It was an instrumental song that greatly heightened the tension and anxiety.

“Everyone please cooperate. Maintain a close, compact formation. The tankers will place shields in front of them and take the outskirts. The magicians will be inside and cast defense spells.”

This was Chris’ order. After recognizing the identity of the Demon King, he knew how important it was to be thoroughly prepared. He was one of the 10 meritorious retainers and well aware of Grid’s large-scale bombardment attack using the spell ‘Alarm’.

“Let’s do as Chris says.”

Close, compact formation...? Someone complained, saying it wasn’t a real war. However, most players followed Chris’ words. It was because they had gotten good results fighting the heavenly kings once they listened to his orders. Yes, now was the time for

cooperation. They wouldn't be able to fight the Demon King by playing solo. The Demon King would naturally be stronger than the four heavenly kings.

The magician Goshar encouraged them, "He is an opponent that magic doesn't work against. Like Chris said, concentrate on defensive spells and build up your contribution. Don't you know? If you stay alive and protect people, you can win a gold medal."

"Isn't it unconscionable to forgo the shield while aiming for a gold medal?"

"T-That's right."

"Hahaha."

The atmosphere gradually relaxed, and the players were no longer influenced by the disturbing music. Everyone had a determined expression. They took a deep breath and slowly entered the hall while maintaining their ranks. The magicians cast light spells, and the darkness

retreated.

“You’re late.”

They saw a huge organ with the Demon King standing beside it. Simultaneously, a notification window rose.

[The Demon King has appeared.]

The contents were short, but there was a sense of weight.

“Shields!” Chris reminded the tankers that there was likely to be an early offensive, and they instantly set up their shields. Then a deafening sound entered their ears. Shells flew, penetrating through the magicians’ shield and crushing the tankers’ shields.

“A cannon?”

“Kuooock...! Keep the formations!”

“Hey! Get up quickly! Raise the shields!!”

It was an unexpected form of attack, and it was too strong and heavy. Dust rose while the players became dizzy. This only lasted for 2–3 seconds. However, this was enough time for the Demon King. The Demon King rushed through the attacks of the ranged damage dealers and reached Seuron of Argentina. Seuron—he was the person who said that ‘Grid has hemorrhoids’ in an interview.

‘This guy?’

He was smiling? Seuron read the expression of the Demon King and felt a chill.

“Death Penalty,” the Demon King’s dismal voice rang out.

Seuron couldn’t even tell if it was a sword or a spear that pierced his chest. “...”

Beyond the great pillar of gray light, the red light around the Demon King shone. The players didn’t dare look at it.

Chapter 956

Grid knew the most efficient way to break a group. The Seven Guilds, the Immortal Guild, the Eternal Kingdom, the Saharan Empire, the vampires, the Red Knights, and so on—he had struggled against so many groups that it would be sad if he hadn't acquired some methods. Grid had been learning slowly but steadily. It wasn't uncommon.

[You have put the Sweet Candy in your mouth.]

[All stats will increase by 30% for 5 minutes until the candy is melted.]

[Blacksmith's Rage has been used. Attack power has increased by 25%, and attack speed has increased by 40% for one minute.]

The moment the players entered through the door with a terrible sound—as if recreating the screams of the four heavenly kings—he brought out all of his power. Fear...

A group of people could easily collapse when their most primitive emotions were provoked. This simple and dishonest emotion spread quickly.

‘Pinnacle Kill.’

It was a skill that dealt 2,000% of his attack power.

“Death Penalty.”

It had a different name though. This was an example of the greatness of the power of language. Seuron hurriedly moved his sword when he saw the attack, but he couldn’t stop it. The Demon King’s sword turned in a direction that was impossible and pierced Seuron’s chest.

[Critical!]

The death penalty became a reality. Seuron made a disbelieving expression as he turned to gray, and Grid calmly received the doubtful gazes. Although Seuron would never know, this was an act of forgiveness from

Grid. He would forgive Seuron for spreading the rumor about hemorrhoids. Grid was truly generous.

“...”His eyes penetrated through the people to someone in the rear. He could see Kraugel standing there with folded arms. The gazes of the two people met in the air.

“Crazy...!”

“Everybody stay calm! Surround him!”

The players surrounded Grid. It was shocking that Seuron, one of the key players, had died with a single blow. However, the players weren't cowardly enough to fear a single death, nor were they loyal enough to feel angry. They just tried to be as impersonal as possible as they attacked the Demon King.

The link between shield and spear was precise as they prepared for a counterattack by setting up the shield. The Demon King was hit by a few moves and attempted to counterattack, but he escaped into the air when he was

interrupted by the shields.

‘A fierce boss.’

‘This is the real deal...’

Gulp. It was a deadlock after a short engagement. The players looked up at the Demon King in the air and couldn't help gulping. He had long black hair, three horns on the forehead, red eyes shining behind the grey mask, two wings, hands that were bigger than his face, and nails as sharp as blades. With an upright posture, the Demon King was both arrogant and intimidating. The mouth under his mask seemed to be smiling, and the players felt like they were being treated as insects.

‘The name is completely different.’

Most of the named NPCs in Satisfy had gold names.

However, the name ‘Demon King’ was a deep red color with gold framing. It felt extraordinary while giving off a sense of oppression.

“Scatter!”

How many seconds passed by? The time it took to observe the Demon King wasn't long, but could it be called only a moment? Rain started falling from the sky.

“....!” Chris' shout unfroze the players' stopped time. The astonished players moved backward. However, their distance to the Demon King was very close. It was difficult to open up the distance since they had surrounded the Demon King when he jumped into the middle of the enemy camp.

Suddenly, the Demon King descended and grabbed the face of a slow tanker. Then he whispered, “Storm of Slaughter.”

It was originally the field magic called Storm Demonic Energy Field. The strong wind and rain caused players to slow down, while lightning fell continuously toward the players who couldn't escape from the area of the spell. The players tried to block the lightning with their shields

or weapons, but it wasn't easy because the lightning acted like a magnet that pushed or pulled the items.

“...” The players, who barely escaped from the area of the spell, stared at the battlefield with gaping mouths. The German representative, Weldon, was like a helpless herbivore as he was held by the Demon King. A series of lightning strikes whirled around the two of them, destroying dozens of players. Gray pillars rose amidst the raging screams and streams of flowing blood. The lava flowing on the ground produced steam, making the atmosphere seem much more dangerous.

“Weldon! What are you doing?”

“Steady yourself!”

The German players desperately cried out, but Weldon couldn't come to his senses. Was it because the Demon King's hand strength was so great that Weldon couldn't move? No, this wasn't the reason why. After all, Weldon was the 6th ranked guardian knight and had several

skills to escape from physical strength.

Then was he shrinking back because of fear? This was hard to deny. It was a lie to say that he wasn't afraid of the Demon King who had killed Seuron with one blow and lifted Weldon up with one hand. However, the basic character of a tanker was to 'confront fear.' If Weldon was a person who couldn't confront fear, he wouldn't have become a tanker. So, why couldn't Weldon shake off the hand of the Demon King?

“Huung...”

It was because the fingers touching his forehead, cheeks, and neck conveyed a strange sensation to him. The sensation was close to pleasure, and Weldon didn't want to miss this pleasure. He couldn't escape from the hands of the Demon King. The rankers saw his heavy breathing and realized belatedly...

‘Is it bewitchment magic?’

‘An incubus type? He looked cool from the beginning.’

‘Shit, this is a headache.’

It was outside the field magic.

“Shit! Don’t be absent-minded and use your shields!”

Goshar shouted to the magicians as he protected Weldon by covering him with earth. Then the confused people started to move in the same direction. The melee used their ranged skills on the Demon King, while the magicians overlapped several layers of shields on their allies being attacked by the field magic.

Still, it was too late. This was a storm created by the Grid who had eaten the candy. The rankers who entered the field for even a few seconds were already walking the path of death.

“This...!”

“What damage...!”

The number of gray pillars increased, and the magicians became impatient. They tried to find allies who were still alive, but their targets were burned to ashes every time. It was meaningless.

“Regas, stop.” Pon stopped Regas, who was about to fly into the Demon King’s field to rescue his allies, and looked at Jishuka. There was a huge firebird behind Jishuka.

“Fly Up!”

The red phoenix unleashed a rain of fire. The skill released from this myth rated Red Phoenix Bow was different from the skill of Grid’s reproduced legendary rated Red Phoenix Bow. It was much more powerful and had the ability to heal all allies within range.

“Wah!”

The players and spectators had already witnessed the scene where Jishuka’s red phoenix had killed the

heavenly king and rescued her allies. They didn't doubt that Jishuka's red phoenix would save the players who were trapped in the evil Demon King's field. Yet...

“Bah,” The Demon King scoffed and reached out toward the red phoenix. The huge red phoenix was sucked into the Demon King's hand, disappearing without a trace. This was the Skill Deletion effect attached to Dark Bus' Ring. Grid was prepared to bring out all his cards today. It wasn't just for the compensation but for Yura as well.

‘You can't go anywhere.’

The surprised players were frozen like stone statues after seeing the red phoenix disappear. Grid turned his gaze toward the camera, conveying his will to Yura who was watching the game.

『 No, what is this? Isn't it a provocation? 』

『 It is obvious, no matter how I look at it. 』

The commentators were horrified when the camera zoomed in on the Demon King's face. It was as if the Demon King was saying, 'The heroes, whom you believe in and are cheering for, are just bugs to me.'

Grid would be sad if he knew this. Feeling conscious of Yura, he was displaying a smile that was as gentle as he could make possible, but the world thought of it as a rotten smile.

『 As soon as I spoke, the storm was lifted! 』

『 The power of the skill is strong, but the duration seems short. It should also have a long cooldown time. The players must aim for this time. 』

『 Players Regas and Pon are taking the lead! Ah! After Player Pon's spear pierced the Demon King's feet, Player Regas' kick has raised his chin! What a pass! 』

『 Damian's buff is concentrated on Chris and Jishuka!

Player Chris' sword tried to cut down the Demon King, but the Demon King avoided it! 』

『 The Demon King is very conscious of Chris' attack. You can see that he is never getting hit. Ah! Even the Demon King can't avoid Jishuka's arrow! 』

『 Player Jishuka's arrow pierced the Demon King's chest, and he can't swing his sword! 』

It was a really exquisite move. Jishuka was well aware of the fact that the Demon King had a higher defense and health than the four heavenly kings. Rather than attempting to hit a mortal wound, she attacked his right hand which held a weapon. It was to cause a physical constraint where he couldn't use weapons. The Demon King tried to swap the weapon to his other hand.

『 Mei Xiao's cloth is binding the Demon King's left arm! 』

『 Katz' bloody storm and Peak Sword are attacking the

Demon King! 』

The 400-against-1 fight had started. The players, who had fought the four heavenly kings twice, joined forces to hit the Demon King thoroughly. The Demon King, who seemed like he would never collapse in his first appearance, was now being hit one-sidedly.

The players and spectators cheered. However, the Overgeared members knew the identity of the Demon King and got shivers.

‘It is a trap!’

There was a reason why the Demon King stood in place and maintained the disadvantageous fight. He would definitely be aiming for something but they realized it too late.

-Kuhahahahaha! The sound of the Demon King’s laughter came from the other side. The players’ gazes naturally turned toward that direction. They were baffled. The

thought that the Demon King who attacked them was just a clone and that the real Demon King was the one laughing filled the minds of the players.

Unfortunately, this was a false judgment. The laughter in the distance was just a trick that Grid set up with the Alarm spell.

“I will seal one eye.”

“...!?”

The players looked away from the direction of the laughter back to the Demon King. Then they saw it. The Demon King had escaped from the encirclement.

“Kneel Down.”

The skill was originally named 100,000 Army Blockade Sword. It dealt 20% damage to all visible enemies and had the ‘blockage’ effect for three seconds. Blocked targets couldn’t move, and their skills or magic would also be sealed off. The disadvantage was that it

consumed fighting energy, but the Undefeated King's swordsmanship exerted great power when facing a large number of people and it now neutralized all players. The melee fighters who were using skills and the magicians who were casting magic—they were forced to their knees simultaneously.

“...” The commentators, audience members, and viewers went silent. It was shocking to see hundreds of rankers kneeling before the Demon King.

“Kuek...! Kuooock...!”

The battlefield became calm like the previous fierce atmosphere was a lie. Some people couldn't understand, some people trembled with fright, and some others were angry. Only one person...

“...” Only Sword Saint Kraugel was standing upright and watching the Demon King. Everyone's gaze was on him. They wanted Kraugel to protect his colleagues from the Demon King. However, Kraugel didn't meet their

expectations. He just stood still.

“Let’s compete in the final showdown.”

This was the promise he had made with Grid last year. Kraugel didn’t want to ignore his promise with Grid, even if it led to defeat and criticism from the world.

‘We will fight one on one.’

Grid read the message in Kraugel’s eyes as he grabbed the neck of the Chinese representative Mei Xiao. His answer was, ‘Yes.’

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Chapter 957

[The party member ‘Mei Xiao’ has died.]

“No!”

“Dammit!”

The players were either disgusted or furious as they witnessed Mei Xiao falling without being able to resist. It wasn't because they made friends with Mei Xiao during the short period of the National Competition though. Rather, it was because Mei Xiao had the power to persistently bind the opponent. She was one of the powers necessary to defeat the Demon King.

This was why Grid had suppressed the players' movements with 100,000 Army Blockade Sword and snatched Mei Xiao instead of harming as many players as possible. Grid had recognized Mei Xiao as a threatening opponent and hit her as soon as possible to increase his chances of winning.

‘I won’t fall until I am left alone with you.’

Grid looked through the gray pillar, which was created due to Mei Xiao’s death, and gazed at Kraugel who was standing far away. A great number of blasts was heard as he used Fly. Dozens of arrows, daggers, and spears flooded toward Grid. The fortunate thing was that in this urgent situation, there was no magic. None of the magicians aimed attack spells at Grid. It was thanks to the effect of Duke of Wisdom that was properly activated during the Demon King’s Appearance, giving the distorted perception that ‘using magic against the Demon King will be poisonous.’

Lantier’s Cloak reduced the damage done by physical attacks such as stabbing, cutting, and throwing attacks by 20%, and it also had a 10% chance of blocking attacks. The Demon King version came in the form of wings that wrapped around Grid to minimize the damage.

[You have suffered 5,900 damage.]

[You have suffered 7,990...]

[The attack has been blocked!]

[The attack has been blocked!]

[You have suffered 7,540 damage.]

[You have suffered 4,620...]

Grid was able to withstand the intense bombardment of the players who were classified as ‘world-class.’ The time that the four heavenly kings endured had been one hour and 38 minutes. For the current Grid whose total health exceeded 1.9 million, his high defense became a more powerful weapon than usual.

‘I’m really going crazy!’

‘He doesn’t have any heals, right? If he can heal himself, this fight will last for more than half a day.’

The players tried not to show it, but they were greatly

agitated. Their skills were either blocked or dealt less than 10,000 damage. It was absurd. They used basic skills with a short activation time to track down the Demon King trying to escape. Even so, the monster didn't receive more than 100,000 damage...?

Considering the fact that most players participating in the Demon King subjugation were using high strength unique weapons or legendary weapons, the Demon King's defense was too high.

“Shit. What the hell? Is he covered in myth-rated things?”

“His stats are too high.”

“Get out of the way!”

The players' momentum was dying down due to the high defense and fraudulent characteristics of the Demon King. At this moment, a white horse leaped across the rocks toward the Demon King in the sky. One of the 10 meritorious retainers of the Overgeared Kingdom was

sitting on the white horse. He had curly hair, a neatly arranged beard, and eyes deeply set in bronze skin. It was the emergence of Pon, who had been popular for a few years with his typical South European good looks.

“I will go with full force, so be careful.”

The Overgeared members were aware of the identity of the Demon King, and Pon was the same. However, Pon didn't hesitate at all. Grid had become the Demon King behind his colleagues back and instantly turned into an enemy. This was the National Competition. There was no need to discuss friendship on a stage where those participating dreamed of honor and rewards.

“Rail Spear!” Pon gripped the spear tightly, and it became a white line.

He wasn't the slightest bit shaken. The perfect white light stretched out beautifully and created a white boundary in the sky. It was like a comet penetrating through the universe that was Demon King Grid.

[You have suffered 41,300 damage!]

“Kuek...!”

The greatest advantage of Rail Spear was the damage achieved through its speed and the certain amount of defense that it ignored. Grid couldn't avoid it and felt a splitting pain in his back. The white horse staggered as it fell to the ground, and Pon grinned at the Demon King.

“Does it hurt? It is a spear made by our leader.” Pon touched a black spear made from Belial's remains.

His words told of how proud he was. The Overgeared members, including himself and Jishuka, were able to become strong like this because of Grid. Grid laughed.

‘I was able to make such items because of all of you.’ He couldn't say these words because he was currently the Demon King.

Grid avoided some of the wyvern's breaths pouring from

above and turned like a spinning top. He aimed his weapon at the eight players who took the lead to jump off the ground after Pon.

“Tear Apart.” (Link)

“...!”

Pon’s Rail Spear only created one straight line while Grid’s Link drew 30 lines. The attack power was low compared to Pon’s Rail Spear, and there wasn’t the ‘certain to hit the target’ effect. The advantage was that it was difficult to avoid, and it became more powerful as the energy blades overlapped. By default, Grid’s stats and items significantly exceeded Pon’s.

“Cough!”

“Cough...!”

The eight players had believed they could do it after seeing Pon’s great leap against the Demon King.

Nonetheless, they were hit by the Demon King’s great

blow and turned to gray. A large amount of blood spilled out as they died and froze on the ground. The commentators were in a stupor.

『 The players couldn't respond to the Demon King's attack just now? 』

『 No. The assassins reacted and tried to avoid it, but they failed. They don't have any flying ability, and it is difficult for them to operate in the air. 』

『 A perfect tanking power and even higher attack power... I don't know who can knock him down. I'm not a player, but my headache is getting worse. 』

『 The best way was for Player Jishuka and Player Mei Xiao to neutralize him. This is much more difficult now that Mei Xiao is dead. 』

『 Um...? No, this...? 』

『... 』

The commentators of each country fell silent at almost the same time. It was because while analyzing the Demon King, one person came to mind. He was durable, strong, could fly, and had field magic.

‘...Grid?’

Yes, the Demon King resembled Grid. However, the commentators didn’t let the name Grid emerge from their mouths. It was because the Demon King didn’t have golden hands that moved on their own. Moreover, the Demon King seemed much stronger than Grid. If they mentioned Grid, the absurd formula of Grid > Demon King > fighting 400 players would be made. Thus, they thought it was better to refrain from saying anything.

Meanwhile, some spectators and viewers were rioting. Most of them were Chinese.

“Kraugel, what the hell are you doing? Why are you only watching?”

“Kraugel killed Mei Xiao! Kraugel dropped the Chinese star!”

“Is he waiting to come out until his colleagues are exhausted by the Demon King in order to win medals? What a small-minded guy!”

“He is a despicable bastard who moved countries many times!”

The Chinese people claimed that Mei Xiao was dead because of Kraugel. They felt desperate after the death of Mei Xiao, China’s only hope, and were angry at Kraugel for ignoring Mei Xiao’s death. The people from other countries saw this and thought it was an absurd case of finger-pointing. There was no obligation for the players to help each other when the rewards for the event was based on contribution.

“Even so, it is a bit disgusting.”

“Yes. The other players are cooperating with each other

while he is being blatantly greedy alone...”

“He doesn’t need to care about image anymore since he has already been pulled down from the top spot. Let’s see if he can win the gold medal alone as he planned.”

“He won’t be able to hold up his head anymore if he doesn’t win the gold medal.”

In the end, many people started criticizing Kraugel. Kraugel had anticipated this situation, but he didn’t care. In the first place, he participated in the National Competition because of Grid, not honor.

『 Ahh! The players have started fighting back! 』

In the midst of the tumultuous atmosphere, the commentators started shouting loudly. The Japanese representative, Katz, was gathering the blood of his colleagues.

“Blood Spear.”

Eight spears made of blood flew out and pierced the Demon King. Regas jumped up and hit the Demon King while Zibal rode the pegasus and pushed the Demon King with a mysterious magic power.

[The pegasus' energy is slowly consuming your mana.]

[The pegasus' energy is slowly consuming your stamina.]

[The pegasus' energy is slowing down the accumulation rate of fighting energy.]

[The pegasus' energy is slowing down your mana regeneration rate.]

[Resistance has failed.]

‘This is tricky. It isn't a coincidence that he won against Yura.’

The pegasus had the peculiar nature to consume the resources of all enemies within a certain range while hindering recovery. This was a big threat to Grid. The

benefits that Grid gained as the Demon King were his health and stamina. There were no mana-related benefits. The pegasus was a big threat to Grid, whose skills consumed a large amount of mana.

Grid thought for a moment before deciding it was better to use Transcend and strike at the pegasus. The battlefield was wide and the pegasus was fast. The shields of the magicians also overlapped in several layers, making it hard for him to penetrate through them. There wasn't even a chance to aim for a gap. The onslaught of Chris, Jishuka, Regas, Pon, Katz, and the Overgeared members made Grid's spirit rise.

“1,000 Ton Sword!” Chris' powerful blow struck Grid in the chest.

[You have suffered 61,700 damage!]

Jishuka's arrow pierced Grid's thigh and made him unable to trigger Revolve in time. This meant he suffered a severe blow. Chris swapped between Grid's Greatsword

and Yetima's Greatsword while activating the power of a Tyrant. This made his strength comparable to Grid's. The players confirmed that the Demon King's health gauge was reduced by one-tenth and felt hopeful.

[The Sweet Candy has melted and disappeared from the tip of your tongue. All stats will return to normal figures.]

Grid was weakened, but a smile spread across his face.

Five minutes...

Grid praised himself for surviving this long alone. The five minutes were long enough for the golden cannon set up next to the organ to get ready.

[Cannon Aiming at the Battlefield]

[Rating: Legendary]

Durability: Infinite Attack Power: 6,500–11,300

- * Takes 1–5 minutes to automatically generate, load and fire shells. The longer the time it takes to create a shell, the greater the attack power.
- * Additional 50% lightning damage.
- * Additional 10% divine damage.
- * Additional 50% damage to humans or humanoid monsters.
- * Additional 200% damage to facilities such as walls.
- * Splash damage equivalent to half the damage will occur in a 10-meter radius around the firing point.
- * There is a certain probability of generating a magnetic field at the moment of firing.

It is a cannon made by melting the blade created by Blacksmith Grid to enlighten a god.

Astaroth's Horn was combined with the Enhanced Blue

Dragon's Breath to act as shells while the pavranium operate the cannon itself.

* The ego of the pavranium is focused on aiming and firing. The Cannon Aiming at the Battlefield will concentrating on firing at the target that the owner is aiming for, rather than protecting the owner.

Conditions of Use: Grid, Pagma.

Weight: 6,150]

It had up to 11,300 attack power, a minimum cooldown of one minute, and a maximum cooldown of five minutes. Taking into consideration the characteristics of the siege weapon called a cannon, it was an item with a huge attack power. First, the golden cannon smashed through the shields built by the tankers and magicians. Now it was aiming at Zibal who was riding the pegasus in Grid's field of view.

“Shoot!”

“...!?”

Who was he calling it toward? The players were baffled by the Demon King's abrupt roar. However, there wasn't a single player who turned to look curiously. They were already tricked once by the Demon King's laughter. No one would repeat the same mistake unless they were an idiot.

Zibal was the same. He ignored the roar in the sky and concentrated on maintaining the pegasus' health. Thus, his reaction was slow.

“Zibal!”

“...What?”

There was something round giving off a dim light. A watermelon-like object was flying with lightning around it. It was the shell that broke down the original formation, and Zibal had no choice after belatedly realizing that it was aiming for him. A shell, that had

broken down the shields of the magicians, was moving through the air in real time.

Zibal clearly read that it was aimed for the pegasus and shouted, “Raiders!”

Then something fell from the sky. The white magic machine, which was over five meters tall, served as a barrier to protect Zibal and the pegasus. The world seemed to collapse. Raiders was hit by the shell, and it leaned over, falling down completely.

“Crazy!”

As a weapon of war, Raiders greatly reduced the damage done by other war weapons. Yet it lost this much durability from one blow? Feeling astonished, Zibal released the summoning of the pegasus and hurriedly boarded Raiders.

“Scatter.” Then the Demon King sent out a dark wave of energy that caused all players to retreat, and he focused

his eyes on Raiders. “Baal’s Eyes.”

[Checking the target item’s stats, options and production method.]

[The Item Replication skill has been activated!]

[Dismissing Triple Layers and equipping Valhalla of Infinite Affection.]

[The legendary rated item ‘Triple Layers’ will be used as the material for the artifact-rated item ‘Magic Machine: Raiders’.]

[The duration of the replication is one day! At the end of this period, the replicated item will be permanently destroyed!]

Grid had dreamed of this scene from the first moment he saw the magic machine. He had a hunch that Zibal’s brilliant comeback would be a good fortune for him.

A mount... In order to use an item that was unfamiliar to

him, Grid freed a power that he had never used before.

“Soul Redemption.”

The exact name was ‘Granting an Ego’. It was a hidden piece that he had obtained from clearing the Behen Archipelago.

[The soul of the legendary great magician, Braham, has been implanted into Magic Machine: Raiders.]

A pitch black giant opened its eyes under the feet of the Demon King.

“Ah... Ahhh...”

The world became distressed.

Chapter 958

The crowd and viewers cheered after seeing Raiders descend. Yura and Chris were the strong rankers who hadn't been able to cope against this white giant, and everyone believed that it would rise and smash the Demon King. It was the same with the other players. The players, who started to doubt victory after seeing a stronger than expected Demon King, once again felt hopeful.

This was due to the presence of the magic machine, Raiders. It was a great presence that could dispel the frustration and despair of its allies.

“Go, Zibal!”

“Zibal! Please win!”

“Zibaaaal!”

Humanity united with one heart as they chanted one

person's name. At this moment, Zibal achieved his dream of becoming the protagonist of the world. Raiders knelt like a knight making a pledge. Zibal stepped on its feet and knees, jumping toward the boarding seat in the middle of its chest and roared, "Believe in me!!"

21 seconds—this was the maximum amount of time that Zibal could activate Raiders. Nevertheless, Raiders' attack power was in the ten thousands. Its agility might be low, but its body and weapon were so large that the attack accuracy was high. Furthermore, Zibal's class was 'Ancient Rider.' He had the unique ability to amplify the performance of his mounts.

Zibal didn't doubt the damage he could inflict on the Demon King if he operated Raiders to the limit. It wasn't false confidence. This was a confidence he had gained after directly defeating Yura and Chris. It wouldn't be polite to them if he didn't trust Raiders' abilities after defeating the representatives of other countries. Zibal was determined to play well for Yura's and Chris' honor.

‘I must win the gold medal!’

Then it happened when he was going to synchronize with Raiders.

“Baal’s Eyes.” Was he bored? The languid voice of the Demon King rang out through the battlefield, and a mystery unfolded.

The black armor that rose in front of the Demon King was transforming. Hundreds of thousands of fragments scattered all over the place and then rejoined. The armor repeatedly shortened, lengthened, and then increased in volume.

“Eh?”

It happened in just a few seconds. The object that was an armor a short time ago changed into a giant. Light dragon scales were wrapped around it. It was a new magic machine, and it boasted a sleek black armor.

“What is this...?”

The Demon King also had a magic machine? The astonished players stepped back. The commentators were silent, the crowd screamed, and the viewers dropped the snacks they were holding.

-Hello?

All the Korean viewers trying to order chicken fell silent, and the owners of the chicken stores were puzzled when the phone suddenly stopped working. In a nutshell, the phenomenon caused them to even forget about the chicken...

The Demon King drove the world into chaos.

“Isn’t that just like Zibal’s magic machine?”

“It is the magic machine summoned by the Demon King. It won’t be weak.”

The quick high rankers tried to analyze the magic machine. On the other hand, all the Overgeared members were dumbfounded. It was hard to believe they were the ones who had been leading their colleagues so far during the Demon King event.

‘Grid isn’t the Demon King?’

That’s right. The ones who felt the most confusion right now were the Overgeared members. They knew the Demon King was Grid, yet he had summoned a magic machine?

‘But Grid doesn’t have a magic machine...?’

Yet the Demon King had summoned a magic machine. This meant that the Demon King wasn’t Grid.

“...How embarrassing.” Pon covered his hot face with his hands. He was embarrassed at the memory of how he had shouted at the Demon King because he thought the

Demon King was his close friend, Grid.

‘Indeed, how can Grid fight as 1 against 400? It was a really ridiculous mistake thanks to the four heavenly kings. Huh?’

Pon was Grid’s friend and colleague, not Grid himself. He didn’t know all of Grid’s abilities and naturally didn’t know about Eyes of Pagma-Baal’s Contractor Version. As such, he had never dreamt that Grid had copied the magic machine. Pon looked up when he detected the energy around him.

Zibal’s voice rang out from where he boarded Raiders, “What? You, what is this? How does this person have Raiders...?”

It was a shout toward the Demon King. He had two golden horns and eyes filled with emerald light, a five-meter-tall height, and a body structure reminiscent of a human’s. Unlike the pure white Raiders summoned by Zibal, the Demon King’s magic machine was black.

Otherwise, the appearance was completely in line with Raiders. Starting from the magic power booster in the back to the tip of the head and down to the toes. Every structure was exactly the same as Raiders.

Other people didn't notice it easily, but Zibal recognized it at first glance. He had no choice but to recognize it. It had been over a year since Zibal had been with Raiders, and every day started with cleaning Raiders. Thus, he couldn't understand. "How do you have Raiders?!!"

Over the past few years, the empire had mined a total of four magic machines. The magic machines had different appearances and characteristics, just like people. Corlei, a scholar and archaeologist of Fourth Prince Edan, had said that he had looked at ancient literature and found there were no identical artifacts. Yet a magic machine that was exactly the same as Raiders had been summoned.

Zibal was confused. Then he became offended. For Zibal, Raiders was his soul companion. This thing dared to look

exactly like his partner. Zibal flew into a rage just seeing it stand beside an AI. They dared to grant this ability to the Demon King...? Zibal thought the S.A Group didn't respect him. However...

“Hoo... Hoo...” Zibal tried to suppress his anger. He knew how dangerous it was to lose his composure in a battle.

‘If I become agitated and take the lead, it will only open up a meaningless consumption war.’

It wouldn't be easy to reach a conclusion if the black magic machine had the same appearance and stats as Raiders. Moreover, the magic power of the Demon King was higher than Zibal's, so the operation time was likely to be longer.

‘I shouldn't have taken it out at the beginning.’

Zibal made a decision. In order to overcome the S.A Group who doomed him and Raiders, Zibal was filled

with a sense of duty to defeat the Demon King.

“Everybody should’ve already noticed, but the magic machine is a mount!”

“ ... ”

While listening to Zibal’s shout, the players felt wary toward the black giant. They had noticed that Zibal wanted to share the strategy to defeat the magic machine, but how could he reveal to the world the method to attack his absolute weapon? A player should never do this. In a sense, Zibal was making a noble sacrifice.

He conveyed his willingness to defeat the Demon King to his colleagues. The morale of the players rose after reading Zibal’s heart. Additionally, some high rankers and the Overgeared members were impressed with Zibal. The reason why Zibal could reveal the attack strategy was because he was confident. He was confident that the world wouldn’t be able to harm him and Raiders even if they knew how to attack it.

‘It isn’t a mere bluff. The magic machine still has hidden potential.’

‘Or he is confident that he can grow it even further.’

‘Zibal... He appeared after two years and has amazed people many times. He has changed a lot.’

It wasn’t an overestimation. Zibal actually was confident. In fact, he was certain that the magic machine wouldn’t be defeated, even if he revealed the strategy to the world. He was confident because there was still a lot of potential, and he also believed in the class characteristics of the Ancient Rider.

“The magic machine can’t operate unless the person boards it directly. Additionally, mana is rapidly consumed because it is a magic machine that runs on mana. Even the 10 great magicians on the continent can only run the magic machine for three minutes.

Increasing the operating time with Mana Drain? It is possible. However, the passenger can’t use any skills or

magic when boarding the magic machine.”

There was a flood of information. It was information that would be helpful someday, not just in the current situation. The players focused as Zibal continued to explain. They didn’t know when the Demon King would move. It was just a feeling, but it felt like the Demon King was listening to Zibal’s explanation with an interested expression.

“In the end, the best way to defeat the magic machine is to buy time. All of you are good enough to buy time. The magic machine basically doesn’t have ranged attacks. Do you remember when I fought Yura and Chris? It swung the spear. The length of the spear is four meters, so it might feel like a ranged attack.”

Now was the key. Zibal decided to reveal only one of the magic machine’s physical weaknesses to the world. “Keep your distance as much as possible and attack the boosters in the back. You can’t break it because of its high durability, but whenever a booster is attacked, the

mana's trajectory will shift and the movements will be constrained. Relentlessly target the booster.”

Hah... He would have to quickly get rid of the booster weakness by strengthening Raiders. At the end of the explanation, the 350 surviving players had determined expressions.

‘I praise you for revealing your weaknesses to everyone.’

‘We won’t let your choice be stupid and will do our best to stop the Demon King.’

Every player respected Zibal in their heart. Of course, this respect couldn’t last long. They didn’t know when they would compete with Zibal once the National Competition. Thus, they had to hold onto the weaknesses of the magic machine that they learned today. Then they would go and mock Zibal. He was a stupid fool.

Zibal just grinned and shrugged. ‘I will be stronger by then.’

The magic machine was classified as an item and could be enhanced. Of course, it had an artifact rating. It was probably as hard to enhance as myth rated items, but the options that occurred with every enhancement were surprisingly great. The booster weakness revealed by Zibal today was something that could be overcome with just one enhancement level.

‘The problem is that at least 20 enhancement stones are required to try enhancing it once...’

The success rate was also in the decimals. However, Zibal believed that as long as he secured a large number of blessed enhancement scrolls from this year’s rewards, his dream of enhancing Raiders could be achieved. After confirming the signals that would be used on the battlefield, Zibal descended from Raiders and recalled it. “Recall, Raiders.”

‘The moment I take Raiders out again is the moment I will inflict a fatal wound on him.’

Zibal summoned the two headed hippopotamus that raised his and his party members' defense. Then he glared at the Demon King. At some point, the Demon King stopped using Fly and was standing on the magic machine's head.

The players' cries were heard all over the battlefield:

“The ranged damage dealers will attack once the Demon King sits on the boarding seat! Accumulate as much damage as possible!”

“It's finally time for the magicians to be active! Attack the booster the moment the magic machines move!”

“We will aim for the cannon in this interval. The swords and spears won't be able to reach the magic machine anyway.”

“A great magician can operate the magic machine for three minutes. Okay, please hold out that long.”

‘Move, Demon King.’

The players were extremely focused as they imagined all sorts of scenarios. The arrows would rush out the moment the Demon King entered the boarding seat. The Demon King would be embarrassed after leaving behind his threatening field magic and swordsmanship for the magic machine. The moment the Demon King abandoned the magic machine and revealed himself again, the spear of Raiders would pierce his chest. The players would definitely win. At this time...

“Huh?”

“...What is this?”

It was different from what they imagined? The Demon King didn't board the magic machine. He stood on the head of the magic machine and crossed his arms arrogantly. Then why? Why was the magic machine moving? An unexpected variable appeared from the beginning, and the confused players turned toward Zibal.

“...What the f**k?” Zibal wasn’t in any state to give advice. He sat stiffly on the hippo with his mouth wide open.

“How is it? Have you adapted to it slightly now?”The Demon King whispered to the magic machine.

He received an answer in his mind, -I was late because I had to fix some messy procedures.

“Can you use magic?”

-It is theoretically possible if I modify it, but my soul is too weak.As it is, I can only use a few basic spells.

-Mana Drain.

It was the legendary great magician Braham—a genius who made a massive golem army that forced the Eternal Kingdom to the brink of destruction.

The mana wandering in the atmosphere and the mana permeated the earth was absorbed by the dark magic

machine. It was an output that far surpassed Raiders'. The amount of magic power in the boosters was three times that of Raiders. The result this produced was that the boosters became three times faster.

A giant spear swept over the battlefield like it was a pillar of Parthenon. It was like an eraser that was going to rub out the players on the battlefield. However, it only had enthusiasm.

“Why aren't you hitting anyone?”

-I have no experience in fighting physically with my own body.

“...Geez, this is great.”

Well, Grid didn't need to worry since Braham could use 'basic magic.' Grid laughed as a skill was triggered.

“Divinity. Baal's Eyes.”

[Checking the target item's stats, options and production

method.]

[The Item Replication skill is activated!]

[The legendary rated item ‘Failure’ will be used as the material for the myth rated ‘Red Phoenix Bow.’]

He had to slay as many enemies as possible while the magic machine was being maintained. It was a must for Grid. The magic machine kept moving. Without losing his balance, Grid pulled back a bowstring, and a red phoenix appeared in the sky.

“No XX, what is this?”

“That jerk has no conscience!”

Curses were spat out everywhere. Yes, even Zibal had a conscience. It meant he wasn’t qualified to be the protagonist yet. Originally, the protagonist acted alone. The protagonist had no conscience.

Chapter 959

[Magic Machine: Raiders]

[Rating: Artifact]

Durability: 12,540/15,888

Attack Power: 13,888 Defense: 9,888

* The skills of the passenger who is of a class other than a 'rider' class don't work with Raiders.

★ Knowledge that transcends the concept of eras has changed the imprint. The passenger's intelligence level is linked to Raiders.

* Raiders consumes 988 mana per second. A rider class passenger will have 588 mana consumed per second. Raiders will stop and be forcibly recalled the moment the passenger's mana is exhausted.

★ Knowledge that transcends the concept of eras has changed the imprint. The passenger will have 2,964 mana consumed per second, and Raiders' output will be three times higher than before.

* The passenger's consciousness and mana are focused on maneuvering Raiders. As a result, the passenger can't use their own abilities such as magic or skills.

★ Knowledge that transcends the concept of eras has changed the imprint. The restriction on the use of unique abilities such as magic and skills has been lifted.

However, there is a high risk of the connection with Raiders being interrupted when using a resource-intensive ability.

* The occupant can't be harmed until Raiders' durability reaches zero. Raiders will stop and be forcibly recalled the moment the passenger's mana is exhausted.

* The number one weapon 'Spear Calling Out for Destruction' has a hard to quantify weight. After

attacking, there is a 95% chance to cause a fracture or stiffen the target. Additionally, there is a 100% chance of greatly reducing the item durability of the target.

- * The number two weapon is only available to riders who have acquired the highest grade riding skill.

- * The number three weapon information is only available to passengers who can fully synchronize with Raiders.

- * Raiders is resistant to abnormal status conditions (apart from physical conditions).

- * There is a 40% reduction in damage from magic and siege weapons.

- * 150% additional damage to buildings such as walls.

- * 80% additional damage to all races apart from gods and dragons.

The Saharan Empire has mined four magic machines.

There is very little information about the ancient artifacts

that are hard to find in history and mythology.

Boarding Conditions: Level 300 or over.

Weight: Measurement isn't possible.]

It wasn't an item worn by players but was an item with the concept of boarding. Anyone could board it, but a riding skill was essential to unleash even greater power. In particular, a passenger's abilities wouldn't work with the magic machine unless they were a rider. It meant that the stats of the passengers didn't apply at all to Raiders.

Could Raiders be called a good item from the position of a non-rider? Yes, Raiders was a good item. Its basic damage and defense alone were sufficient to demonstrate a destructive performance.

After level 300, one point in the strength stat increased attack power by 0.7. The attack power of the +4 Enlightenment Sword was 4,611. After level 300, one

point in the stamina stat increased defense by 0.9. The +3 Valhalla had 1,622 defense. Even if he combined all of this with his helmet, gloves, shoes, and cloak, Raiders' attack and defense were twice as high as Grid's.

The attacks also caused fractures, stiffness, and item destruction. It was no wonder why Chris couldn't win.

‘The empire has four of these things?’

Through the item information, Grid got a peep at the power of the Saharan Empire. He licked his lips as he remembered that the strongest NPC mentioned by Lim Cheolho, ‘Grandmaster Zikfrector’, also belonged to the empire. His tension increased at the thought of fighting against the mighty empire. To be honest, he was afraid.

‘Still...’

Grid pulled the bowstring of the newly copied myth rated Red Phoenix Bow to the limit and calmed his heart.

‘I have to fight.’

It wasn't a matter of choice. The Saharan Empire dreamed of unifying the West Continent and would definitely invade the Overgeared Kingdom. Even if this wasn't the case, Grid had a duty to resolve the grudges of Piaro and Asmophel. It was an inevitable fate.

“Fly Up!”

Grid aimed for the magicians first. The ice blossoms that slowed Raiders, the big hands made of sand that held onto Raiders' arms, and the constant explosions against the boosters were very threatening.

“I'll stop it!” The South Korean representative Coke responded first. He used a dash skill and ran in front of the magicians who were the targets of the red phoenix.

‘Please, just survive one blow.’

This was Coke's attitude.

“I will be a barrier to defend my allies!”

He used the skill that Vantner, the 1st ranked guardian knight and one of the 10 meritorious retainers, had declared to be the ‘strongest shield technique in the world.’ The Wall of Protection, which Vantner had built up through his own difficulties, was manifested as a tall barrier around Coke’s shield. Could it handle the red phoenix that looked stronger than Jishuka’s red phoenix? This crowd and viewers questioned it.

“Tsk.” The Demon King frowned and clicked his tongue. He had predicted that his red phoenix would be blocked. Wall of Protection exerted a particularly strong power against projectiles. Additionally, Grid knew the power of Coke who was the Overgeared Kingdom’s secret weapon.

The red phoenix hit the barrier, and there was a deafening noise. The remnants of the red phoenix covered the battlefield with a rain of fire. The players’ cheers came from all over the place.

“Wow, he is the real thing.”

“I thought the best new player this year would be Haster.”

Coke’s performance exceeded expectations every time, and it was great enough to impress the rankers of each country. He just had a long way to go in comparison to Grid. Grid stood on the magic machine’s head and ignored the bombardment of magic. Demon King Grid had already summoned a second red phoenix. This was the power of God’s Command, which reset the cooldown of the skill.

“This...!” Coke’s face paled as he tried to raise the shield again, but it was hard. His arms were badly damaged from his first collision with Fly Up! The rankers ran to his side belatedly, but it was pointless. The red phoenix didn’t only aim for Coke. As it flew toward Coke, the red phoenix changed its direction and flew over Coke’s head instead.

The red phoenix seemed like it was alive. It seemed to prove the fact that the Demon King’s skill level was much

higher than Jishuka's skill level. The red phoenix fell over the heads of the tankers and killed more than ten magicians. This was the power of being overgeared. Grid used the Elf Thimble which changed non-targeted attacks to a targeted attack.

“How can that son of a bitch shoot so well?”

Had it been 10 minutes since the battle began...? The Demon King was like an onion, continuing to show new abilities in this short amount of time.

‘What is the point of there being no Grid?’

The players had been happy because they didn't have to face Grid in this year's National Competition. They had believed they could be more active because there was no Grid. Yet although there was no tiger, the fox reigned. Their anger erupted as they were brutally trampled on by the Demon King who appeared in Grid's absence. The moment that the players thought this, the black giant jumped high to escape the bondage of magicians.

The giant's flashing eyes were obviously staring at Jishuka. Grid held it back. "Start with the magicians."

Jishuka was clearly one of the most threatening enemies. She was one of the few damage dealers who could cause significant damage to Grid. In fact, Grid was being damaged by Jishuka's arrows, and his health was falling. Even so, Grid wasn't fazed by the loss of his health. He had many blood-sucking related skills and items, as well as recovery-related titles and items. Health was something that could be restored at any time. The moment he gained 1.9 million health, he became more relaxed about his health.

"Our first priority is dealing with the magicians."

The problem was the magicians. Grid had just killed 10 of them, but there were still around 70 people remaining. Their spells to restrain Raiders were a threat. Raiders turned away from Jishuka and rushed forth. Once the giant with a leg length of three meters moved at triple the output, it crossed a distance of several hundred meters in

an instant. The giant crossed the burning battlefield, and the magicians scattered in a frightened manner. Despite this, there were no casualties.

『 The attack rate of the Demon King's magic machine is very low. 』

『 I agree. Since it was summoned, not a single attack hit until now. 』

『 It is fast compared to Zibal's magic machine, but it doesn't seem to be very effective. The players must've welcomed it. 』

The commentators and audience members were relieved. In contrast to Zibal's magic machine, the effectiveness of the Demon King's magic machine was too low. It was just a quick mount.

“Is it half-complete?”The players quickly understood the atmosphere.

They realized that the Demon King's magic machine

didn't act as intended and was actually a useless lump of scrap metal. This enlightenment made the players active. The players used the magic machine as a foothold and climbed up to attack the Demon King.

Grid was forced to put away the Red Phoenix Bow and pull out the Enlightenment Sword to respond. Black flames exploded in the form of black magic, and it helped him overcome the crisis. As expected, items were the only thing he could believe in. Inside the mind of the grumbling Grid, Braham's trembling voice was hard, - These insignificant things dare...!

Braham felt ashamed of being treated as a folding screen. The shame became anger, and that anger was expressed as magic.

-Fireball!

“What...?!”

Many large fireballs were created over the head of the

magic machine, and the doubtful players once again turned their eyes toward Zibal.

‘Didn’t you say the magic machine can only swing the spear?’

‘You said that the magic machine can’t use spells?’

All types of questions were burning in their eyes, but Zibal couldn’t answer them. He was more surprised than anyone else. Wasn’t this exactly like the legendary spell, Meteor? The magicians were unable to protect themselves from the baptism of fire. Several layers of shields melted down, and dozens of magicians turned to ashes.

『 Hup...! 』

The spell was aimed perfectly, completely different from when it was swinging the spear. The destructive power was also above that of the red phoenix. The legendary magic was revealed to the world, and the commentators

came up with a new hypothesis.

『 Is the magic machine actually the main body of the Demon King? 』

The magic damage that the magic machine showed was too great.

-Wind Cutter!

The magic machine summoned a tornado this time.

Unlike an ordinary tornado, dozens of sharp blade-like tornadoes were created simultaneously, quickly sweeping over the battlefield. The commentators didn't know much about magic, so a specialist called Dr. Magic jumped forward.

『 T-That is the legendary magic, Chaos Tornado...! 』

『 Chaos Tornado...? What type of magic is that? 』

『 It is a large-scale tornado magic that uses the spell Wind Cutter as a basis. It is the most powerful spell

known to turn an area into a wasteland in no time!

Hundreds of years ago, the legendary great magician Braham used it to destroy the Etel tribe...! 』

Dr. Magic's extremely excited words made the crowd and viewers nervous. Chaos Tornado... The legendary magic would turn the battlefield into a hell. The initial number of 80 magicians had already been reduced by more than half, and the tankers' shields had turned to crude garbage. However, Braham's anger still didn't calm down.

-Chain Lightning!

Braham kept using low-grade spells in order to make this battlefield disappear. This spell was one grade above the basic spells. It caused the magic machine to overload, but Braham didn't care. Waves of lightning enveloped the battlefield. It was four times wider than the range of Grid's field magic, Storm Demonic Energy Field. Such a scene unfolded.

“A-Avoid it!”

It was really dangerous. With the exception of one player, all the players instinctively started to scatter in all directions. That player was the emperor of the FPS game world. He was one of the Five Miracles praised by Lim Cheolho, the disciple of Red Sage Winfred and the master of Heroic Story.

Haster approached the magic machine instead of running away. The waves of lightning hit like a tsunami. A translucent orange shield was created, and it defeated the waves of lightning. This was the effect of the skill ‘Heroic Story’, which nullified all types of skill and magic damage during the time limit. It was the power of one of the seven malignant saints, just like Grid’s God’s Command.

Even the legendary great magic (?) was defeated by the orange shield around Haster. He pierced through the continuous spells and arrived at the magic machine that was emitting black smoke from being overloaded. This

National Competition would be his brilliant debut. He would use the National Competition as a foothold to regain his former glory. The Demon King event was a great opportunity for what Haster planned. If he managed to deal a big blow to the Demon King, his presence would be deeply ingrained in the world.

As he poured out what he had learned from Winfred, Haster didn't doubt this. He believed in the power of Heroic Story. Haster was counting on dealing a one-sided blow to the Demon King during these 10 seconds and then escaping unharmed. However, Heroic Story was a power that prevented 'magic and skills.' It didn't block the basic attacks. Haster was defenseless against the Demon King's basic attacks.

[You have suffered catastrophic damage!]

[You have died.]

The debut of an old legend while the whole world watched... It ended in only five seconds.

Simultaneously, in the United States, Hurent burst out laughing as he watched the National Competition.

“You are on the same train as me, and you aren’t a match for him.”

‘Pine caterpillars should live eating pine needles,’ Hurent thought this once again.

Just like the other members of the Five Miracles, Hurent didn’t know that he was called one of the Five Miracles. His self-awareness was terrible. It was a defect created by Grid.

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Chapter 960

-The American trio is trolling. □□;

This was the overall reaction. Kraugel was watching the situation from the sidelines. Zibal had spread wrong information, which caused the situation to deteriorate. Haster had flown toward the Demon King head-on and gotten killed, contributing to the lowered morale.

...Their actions just seemed pathetic. Their enthusiastic fans couldn't even defend them, and the Americans felt ashamed.

“Are we going to lose?”

“Of course. How can anyone beat that?”

Haster's useless death was the breaking point for the hopes of the viewers. Now, the people had reached a stage where they thought it was impossible to beat the Demon King. Hundreds of millions of viewers watched

and sympathized with the players who were like clowns against the ‘undefeatable’ enemy.

Just as the Demon King was driving in the wedge, the huge giant fell to one knee. Perhaps there was a problem in the process of using magic. The Demon King stood on top of its head in a steady manner and declared in a dismal voice, “All of you will die.”

A skill that dealt 60% of his attack power 30 times in total to all targets within 10 meters (not targeted) and had a cooldown time of 10 minutes—it was 100,000 Army Massacre Sword. Originally, it should be a purple-red, but now a silver energy exploded toward the remaining magicians.

At present, there were 300 players left. People expected the players to give up, but they were mistaken. The players’ willpower wasn’t broken yet. Was it easy for rankers to become frustrated?

“The cannon bombardment interval is exactly five

minutes.”

“The bombardment heads in the direction of the Demon King’s gaze. If we read the Demon King’s gaze, we will be prepared for the bombardment.”

“The moment he abandoned the bow and raised the sword, his health recovery rate slowed considerably. He lost the effect of the Red Phoenix Bow that Jishuka mentioned. The Demon King’s natural recovery rate is slow for a boss monster.”

“The Demon King spins like a spinning top every time he uses a skill. It is a threat that only cuts you when he gets close. This is simply a skill activation motion. If we use physical constraints to stop his spinning, it is likely the skill will be canceled.”

“The poison from the armor is difficult to get rid of, but the deployment speed is slow. Pay attention to keeping a safe distance and we can avoid it.”

During the 10 minute battle, the Demon King had a one-sided advantage. 100 players had already died. However, the players didn't feel sad. They analyzed the Demon King throughout the battle and devised a strategy. Information gathering and analyzing were the basis for raids.

“He adds a spinning motion to the footwork... Damian, please be prepared to act. I will start the counterattack the moment the Demon King's magic machine recovers,” Jishuka gave out instructions. Her gaze focused on the increasing amount of smoke that was pouring from the Demon King's body. It wouldn't be strange if it exploded immediately. She didn't know why, but the user of the magic seemed angry.

Damian expressed some doubts, “The Demon King's health is still almost at the maximum. Isn't it too soon to make yourself a target?”

“There are 300 of us, 300. If we all accumulate thousands of damage per person, we can consume the

two million health.”

“He is floating in the air, and not many people can get close to him at the same time.”

“He will eventually come down to the ground. There will be no mass slaughter for the time being.”

Grid’s weaknesses were his cooldown time and resources. His skills were powerful, but they consumed a lot of resources and had long cooldowns. He had been using skills for 10 minutes continuously and was clearly weakened. Fly wouldn’t be available for him to use forever. It was Jishuka’s judgment that they shouldn’t give Grid any more time.

‘Now, the only wide-area skill left is Transcended Link. We need to block that footwork.’

Jishuka had been Grid’s colleague since the days when he was unknown. The skill effect might’ve changed, but she was able to grasp the status of Grid’s skills through

the final result.

‘100 people in 10 minutes. The damage is greater than expected, but it was worth it.’

They should spread out through the battlefield as much as possible. This was the order that Jishuka and Chris gave to the players. It was to minimize the damage from Grid’s wide-area skills. However, some players didn’t trust the order and crowded together. This meant that Grid’s skills were showed to have a great effect. In particular, the loss of the magicians was painful. Even so, it was within the acceptable range. It was still a 300-against-1 battle, and the players still had an overwhelming advantage.

Pon whispered to Jishuka who was pulling out an arrow, “Is that really Grid? How can he summon a magic machine?”

“Grid’s clone copied Grid’s items. He might’ve gained a hidden piece to copy items after killing the clone.”

“Combination, transformation, and now copying?”

Wasn't it a fraudulent skill? Pon found it hard to believe. Still, Jishuka was adamant. “Have you forgotten? Our leader isn't someone common sense applies to.”

In the old days, Jishuka had seen an inexplicable area after encountering the sky above the sky Kraugel. Now she felt it from Grid. It was difficult to understand him as a friend or an enemy. The difference was that Grid caused infinite fear now that he was an enemy. It felt like they had crossed a river they shouldn't have crossed.

‘It has been a long time since my blood boiled like this.’

Jishuka was a predator. She ate instead of being eaten. Licking her red lips, Jishuka suppressed her anxiety and pulled back her bowstring. She aimed precisely for the moment when the Demon King jumped from the magic machine. The Demon King's chest was hit by the charged arrow, and he was thrown away from the magic machine. Simultaneously, the magic machine exploded like a

signal.

Damian used a wide-area buff and shouted, “We will start the offensive!”

[You have put the Sweet Candy in your mouth.]

[The Hermes Shoes have been equipped.]

[Skill Enhancement has been used.]

[The Baby Dragon’s Fire has been swallowed.]

[The Valbun Sword has been equipped.]

...

...

The rankers brought out items purchased from the Reputation Store. They were items which they had bought with the four heavenly kings and the Demon King in mind. The rankers’ reputation points weren’t as high

as Grid's. They were limited in comparison, so the rankers had to be more cautious about using them.

Chris' greatsword struck the Demon King, who barely raised his body from the explosion. The damage was considerable. The Demon King tried to counterattack, but Regas' strike forced him back to the ground.

"Kuek...!" Pon's spear pierced the Demon King's chest, and Damian's sword linked to the attack, dealing the Demon King with a serious injury. Poison emerged from the Demon King's armor, but they ignored it and kept attacking. They weren't fragile enough to shrink back from this damage.

"Annihilate!" Iyarugt charged up inside Iyarugt's Sheath and entered the 'intoxicated' state. His attack power increased by 500%, and he borrowed the power of Peak Sword's strongest skill. It was the deadly sword that defeated Hero Kraugel in only two blows last year.

[You have suffered 230,900 damage!]

[The gap between the shoulder blades and armor is weakened, exposing a weakness!]

The Sweet Candy and Damian's buff caused Peak Sword's attack power to destroy the Demon King's armor. This was just the beginning. Hundreds of players ran up to the Demon King who was still caught by Pon's spear.

“Blood Rain.”

The Demon King's blood surged into the sky and then poured down like rain. It was a wide-area attack that showed a great effect against the heavenly king called Kobold. The magic dealt a severe blow to the Demon King and strengthened Katz, completely changing the flow of the battlefield.

The fallen Demon King couldn't stand up easily, and the players' momentum skyrocketed. As they fought hard, the dungeon produced by Eat Spicy Jokbal was nearing completion. In the middle of the battlefield, Eat Spicy

Jokbal was setting up a small fortress which would increase his teammates' recovery while blocking the artillery shelling.

“Huhu, the flow has changed completely.”

In the Daejin Group's executive boardroom, the presidents of the various affiliated companies who received Lee Jinmyung's call were impressed. The Demon King, who had killed the players one-sidedly for 10 minutes, could no longer fight back and was being beaten up.

“The three Korean players are playing a big role. Maybe South Korea will get several gold medals.”

“Can't we enter the top three with just two medals? I am looking forward to it. The effects of the event will be amplified if South Korea shows a better performance.”

The executives who didn't know the identity of the Demon King were excited. In particular, the heads of the

affiliated companies conducting events related to the National Competition were excited.

On the other hand, Chairman Lee Jinmyung, the president of Daejin Motors, and three public relations directors were stiff. They had to know the identity of the Demon King. In fact, they were waiting for Grid to unveil his identity after winning. So, from their standpoint, this development was truly the worst.

‘There is no meaning if he loses.’

Would the public be enthusiastic about the loser? No, absolutely not. The Demon King would be met with ridicule and criticism instead of cheers if he were defeated. Despite abandoning the country to become the Demon King, Grid only managed to get this result.

“Tsk.”

A loser couldn’t be raised as the group’s signboard. There was a half-gray mask covering the Demon King’s face,

and Lee Jinmyung clicked his tongue as the cracks in it started to run red with blood. It was regrettable that he had missed the big fish called Grid, but Grid was too terrible.

‘He made a promise he couldn’t keep.’

Lee Jinmyung didn’t like a guy who couldn’t keep his calm. Grid wasn’t good enough for his granddaughter. Feeling ashamed for having coveted such a person for a while, Lee Jinmyung shook his head and lit a cigarette. His gaze was still on the monitor, but the situation didn’t enter his head. His head was only filled with the plan to make Yura his successor. It was at this moment that...

『!! 』

『 No...!! What...!! 』

“....?” He was lost in his thoughts when he was interrupted by the commentators’ shouting. Chairman Lee Jinmyung couldn’t fully understand what they were

talking about or what was happening on the screen. He rubbed his cigarette onto the ashtray as the surprised cheer of Daejin Motors' president entered his ears.

“Yes!!”

“....?”

What was this? Why was the head of Daejin Motors showing such a frivolous attitude in front of the executives? Chairman Lee Jinmyung frowned as he belatedly recognized the situation.

On the screen, Demon King Grid was injured by several people, then he caused an explosion. It was a nuclear explosion. More than 200 out of the 300 players remaining turned to gray. Among the 200 players, there were famous members of Overgeared that Lee Jinmyung knew, including the 1st ranked Chris.

The commentators made a fuss while the players who barely survived had dumbfounded expressions.

Chairman Lee Jinmyung was absentminded for a moment before jumping up and shouting, “Yes!!”

“...!?” The executives were astonished. The owner of the Daejin Group, known as the ‘dictator’ and ‘charismatic chairman’ in the industry, was embarrassing himself in front of the executives...? Were they seeing wrongly? The executives made baffled expressions.

“Stingray!” The chairman even used a chuimsae. (TL: an exclamation made during Korean traditional music that is used to connect the musician and the audience, creating a cheerful atmosphere. Stingray isn’t a common exclamation and the only note I found while googling is related to the excited cries fisherman used to make when they caught something they desired.)

Chairman Lee Jinmyung was just as happy as the president of Daejin Motors. He was proud that his eye for people was great.

‘Yes, I can borrow the power of my outstanding

grandson.’

There was uncontrollable greed in Chairman Lee Jinmyung’s eyes as he watched Grid.

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Chapter 961

“...!?” Grid got chills down his spine shortly after jumping off the magic machine. Jishuka’s arrows, which appeared without leaving a trace, flooded toward his heart.

‘Dammit.’ The arrows were the only things he hadn’t blocked throughout the battle. He couldn’t afford to concentrate on the arrows that arrived without any sound. Around two months ago, Jishuka had made the same expression after clearing a hidden quest and learning a new archery skill.

‘I should’ve noticed that she is a beast.’

Grid was certain. On this favorable terrain, Jishuka was strong enough to be the most revered person. She had been maintaining the best form for many years and had finally reached the realm of the sky above the sky.

Jishuka was truly an amazing person. It was encouraging that she was his friend and colleague. On the other hand

—
‘Yura.’

Yura—who only experienced a series of frustrations after becoming a legend—came to his mind, and his heart grew heavy. Despite her talent and hard work, she had failed... Grid could only think that she had no luck. She had gone through a period of misfortune, and Grid could tell how much she had been suffering. He wanted to help her. He didn't want her to give up.

In this moment, Grid was struck by the arrows in a defenseless state and was thrown from the magic machine. The magic machine exploded. Grid's field of view spun around and around as he was swept up by the blast. The durability of his items dropped greatly. It might be confusing, but Grid coped with the situation calmly. He overcame his dizzy vision and got up while adjusting the posture of his sword.

His insight stat and the Slaughterer's Eye Patch gave him

a warning. However, he couldn't prevent Chris' attack. It wasn't enough to cope with the attack of the 1st ranked player and one of the 10 meritorious retainers of the Overgeared Kingdom. Grid was thrown by Regas, stabbed by Pon, and cut by Damian and Peak Sword...

The bombardment of skills from 300 players quickly reduced Grid's health. He was trampled on the ground, and Grid realized the greatness of the power of numbers. He fell to his knees and cursed as he thought of the people who coined the saying, 'There is no shame in a collective beating.'

From the moment he crashed onto the ground, Grid didn't have any time to raise his fingers. The attacks came from all directions without delay and completely blocked his movements. Even a weak attack became a huge threat. Hundreds of thousands of health flowed out per second, and it seemed that he would die right away.

'I was too prideful.'

In fact, Grid had been filled with confidence ahead of this battle. He alone understood the system of the Demon King subjugation and was able to make all types of precautions according to it. He could also use all his blacksmithing skills without any burden because the National Competition's server was completely separated from the main server.

Grid was forced to judge that he was in a favorable position. Then he took one step further. He saw the players as easy targets. With the exception of the Overgeared members and a few high-ranked players, the rest could be dealt with using one skill or a few basic attacks.

He thought it would be a 1-against-30 fight, instead of a 1-against-400 fight. It was a misjudgment. First, it was difficult to hit them itself. The participants thoroughly used their numbers advantage to completely neutralize Grid's attack power. Their defense was also excellent. The formula of death wasn't easily established for the players who were representatives of their countries.

The biggest problem was the ‘information’ that the Overgeared members provided to the players. After knowing that the Demon King was Grid, Jishuka and Chris were now in full command of the players and most of Grid’s wide-area skills were no longer effective. Grid didn’t show it, but he was unbelievably embarrassed when he cloned the Red Phoenix Bow and used ‘Fly Up!’, only to find the number of enemies in his field of view to be unreasonably small.

[You have suffered 3,900 damage!]

[You have suffered 10,040 damage!]

[The durability of Valhalla of Infinite Affection has decreased by 19.]

[You have received the abnormal condition ‘bleeding.’]

[You have resisted.]

[Due to the title effect of First King, the Great King’s

Dignity has been activated.]

[You have counterattacked and reflected the status condition.]

[You have suffered 2,730 damage!]

[You have suffered 5,800 damage!]

[The durability of Valhalla of Infinite Affection has decreased by...]

...

...

It felt like an eternity. Grid was beaten one-sidedly and recalled the school days when he was helpless. The difference from the past was that he wasn't shaken at the reminder of his trauma. It was a trauma he had already overcome. He had yet to overcome his relationship trauma, but it wasn't an important issue now.

[The effect of the ‘First King’ title has been activated!]

[A shield that will block as much damage as the health lost in the last minute will be created. All terrain adaptation will increase by 100%, while movement speed and defense will increase by 10%.]

He lost 70% of his health in just a few seconds. Grid gained some distance thanks to the shield and became aware of the passage of time. He remained calm as the players entered his vision. Some people were gasping due to the poison from Valhalla while others were confused by Great King’s Dignity. There were many people who seemed to be in a dangerous state, but all of them were absorbed in attacking without backing down. The desire to hit the Demon King a bit more and gain medals controlled them completely.

“ ... ”

The shield had bought Grid some time. Grid calmly checked his condition while taking into account Tiramet’s

power. He had enough mana to use Transcended Link after linking up Freely Move and Fly. The combo of these three skills could save Grid from the immediate crisis and slaughter dozens of players.

It was afterward that was the problem. His mana would fall to the bottom. He wouldn't be able to maintain Fly for long and would eventually crash to the ground. Then the same thing would happen again, and it would become really dangerous. At best, he would kill dozens of players but have no way to win.

‘Belial’s power of fire can make a path of flames, but the result is the same.’

In the end, mana was a problem.

‘Alarm isn’t ready yet.’

Grid had roughly predicted when the four heavenly kings would be broken through, but he hadn’t been able to grasp it perfectly. Thus, he had set the linked Alarm and

Magic Missile as late as possible. He couldn't depend on them yet.

Thoughts of Noe, Randy, the Overgeared Skeletons, the light elemental, and Tiramet passed through Grid's brain. Should he summon them for this immediate crisis?

‘It is too premature.’

Noe's defense skill and his skill to take away stats would be a big help, but this wouldn't guarantee victory. The pets and pet owner wouldn't be able to last for a long time against the nearly 300 players. Grid's pets would be quickly recalled, and he would soon be alone again. Furthermore, the light elemental had a separate use.

[You have suffered 23,000 damage!]

[The durability of Valhalla of Infinite Affection has decreased by 37.]

His distinct half-mask that was covered in red—the mask

originally named Bizarre Mask was gaining more and more cracks in it. The blood leaked through the cracks and cooled Grid's face.

‘This...’ Grid's heart started to thump.

He fully realized that he was experiencing a great crisis. Defeat, failure—he was unaccustomed to them despite having experienced them countless times. Words that he didn't want to become familiar with ran through Grid's mind. There was something strange. He felt excited instead of frustrated and desperate.

Grid sensed it intuitively. There was a solution that he hadn't thought about yet. This was the birth of the ‘wisdom’ created by his experiences and efforts which had accumulated over the years.

‘The power of lies?’

Grid was reminded of a power he had been ignoring. The battle between Kraugel and the Hero spread like a

panorama in Grid's mind, inspiring him deeply. The Hero had taken advantage of the power of lies and shown how to utilize a skill using multiple clones.

‘However, I won't use it that way.’

He lacked the Hero's ability to react quickly to changing situations.

‘Nevertheless, I have something better than the Hero.’

Overgeared. Right, it was being overgeared. The Hero didn't have Khan's legacy. Valhalla of Infinite Affection had a skill called Moving Fortress.

[It can be activated if the wearer's health drops by more than one tenth (Enable/Disable can be selected).

-Converts the durability of Valhalla of Infinite Affection to defense (one durability = two defense). -Immune to all conditions (including physical statuses). -It will last for one minute, and the current durability of Valhalla of Infinite Affection will be set to 30 points (at the end of

Moving Fortress, the current durability will be restored by a third of the maximum durability).

* Please note that if the durability falls to zero, the item will be permanently destroyed.

The wide range skill 'Impregnable', which deals half of all damage received in the last five minutes in a 50-meter radius, can be activated.

Skill Resources Consumption: Valhalla of Infinite Affection's maximum endurance will drop permanently by 200.

Skill cooldown time: 10 minutes.]

'I can do it.'

The puzzle pieces aligned in Grid's head. This was the moment wisdom blossomed. It was an ordinary level of wisdom, but it was a special power for Grid.

'Blackening. Belial's Power.'

[The power of the great demon Belial summoned in the Rune of Darkness has been opened!]

[It is impossible for a human to digest all three of Belial's powers.]

[You are in a half-demon state. Your body has endured the pressure of immense power. However, it is still impossible for a human to digest all three of Belial's powers at the same time.]

[You can use one of Belial's three powers of: Darkness, fire, or illusion.]

[You have chosen the power of illusion!]

Grid started quickly producing clones as his health was consumed. His field of view split and widened. The faces of the enemies surrounded him, the backs of the enemies surrounded him, and the feet and crowns of the enemies surrounded him. They entered Grid's vision at once.

“This?” The players’ face paled with terror. They could see the Hero’s appearance in the Demon King.

“Spread out! Hurry!” Chris hurriedly shouted toward the players.

『 I-Isn’t that the Hero’s clones...? 』

『 W-Why does the Demon King have the Hero’s power...? 』

The international commentators stuttered.

-What?What is this?

-Don’t tell me...

The crowd and viewers were in shock like hammers had slammed into their heads.

“Moving... Fortress,” the Demon King chanted while coughing up blood. He resisted all the physical and abnormal conditions caused by Jishuka’s arrows.

“Huup!” Grid focused on controlling himself. The players who had just been beating the Demon King up were now surrounded by clones. Grid narrowed the distance to Chris and grabbed him.

“Heok! Hey, let me go!”

‘What if I don’t want to?’ Grid grinned as he whispered into Chris’ ears in a frightening manner, “Impregnable.”

This was a wide-area skill that released half of all damage the hero suffered in the last five minutes in a radius of 50 meters. The stronger the opponent, the more powerful the explosion that swept over the battlefield would be. Hundreds of gray pillars soared into the sky, and a green light shone from beyond the soaring dust.

Then a white giant that was shining came rushing over. It was Zibal’s Raiders.

“Griddddd!”

Unlike the others who were still doubting the Demon King's identity, Zibal was certain of it. It meant he acknowledged Grid's power. Other people thought that Grid couldn't fight in a 400-against-1 fight and were trying to ignore reality. However, Zibal was different. It was possible if it was Grid. Zibal thought simply and guessed the identity of the Demon King. A huge spear flew toward the ragged Grid.

“...Flash.” Grid barely summoned the light elemental, and it let out a strong burst of light, blinding Zibal who was on the magic machine. Thanks to this, the spear hit empty air.

“I won't fight if you don't get off from there.” Grid laughed evilly like a natural villain. Behind his broken mask, his dark eyes focused on Jishuka.

Jishuka shivered. It wasn't out of fear though. She had an ecstatic expression on her face as she watched the Demon King. It was a reaction she had shown multiple times to one man.

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Chapter 962

‘Did he intentionally design this situation?’

Since the moment Grid was hit by Charging Shot, Jishuka had been filled with an anxiety that was difficult to express clearly. The timing of the magic machine’s explosion was perfect. Grid exposed a large gap in his defense, and the players didn’t miss this opportunity. Hundreds of scattered players gathered around Grid.

They fell into the trap. From the moment that Charging Shot hit, Grid had this current development in mind.

“He is becoming sexier.” Jishuka shivered as she recalled the scene of five Grids in red armor. Her beautiful face turned red, and a rough breath emerged from the gap in her lips. She wanted to try dissecting Grid’s skull. Even the folds in his brain seemed sexy.

Masquerading as the Demon King, Grid stared at Jishuka. Jishuka’s blush thickened. She trembled from

extreme excitement.

“Come.”

Approximately 80 players had survived. Most of the Overgeared members—including Chris and Peak Sword—might’ve been killed, but there were still many strong players such as Damian and Zibal with his magic machine. Despite this, Grid was looking at her, concentrating solely on her. It meant she was the biggest threat to him. Jishuka felt great joy at monopolizing Grid’s gaze.

---!!

Black arrows were fired soundlessly. Jishuka was the only one who knew exactly how many there were. Grid was facing her head on and wasn’t aware of the arrows flying from different trajectories. This wasn’t an uncommon situation, but Grid was feeling rushed. He didn’t dwell on impossible defenses or avoidance. Instead, he was like a bull. He was attracted by the

charming red cloth called Jishuka.

“Yes, I’m coming!”

Jishuka’s excitement was getting out of control. The arrows struck Grid’s body. His philtrum, between his eyes, and in the middle of his forehead were hit. This was a terrible feat of skills. It was understandable why the people of Tzedakah used to compare Jishuka’s spirit to a wild beast and a hunter. She showed no concept of mercy toward her target. Logically, Grid should be shrinking back.

‘Pagma’s Swordsmanship.’

Grid was currently under the protection of Moving Fortress and was completely resistant to physical attacks. The arrows inserted between his eyes and the blood flowing down didn’t disturb him.

‘Link.’

Grid broke through the arrows, reached Jishuka, and

unleashed dozens of energy blades. Jishuka moved in a half turn to widen her distance from Grid while drawing back her bowstring. She dodged a few energy blades and fought back.

[You have suffered 8,930 damage!]

[You have suffered 7,590 damage!]

[You have suffered 13,580 damage!]

Her aim was also perfect. Jishuka avoided the protective gear—such as armor and shoulder guards—that Grid was wearing and damaged him. She often hit his weak points, but she couldn't evade his attacks forever. Jishuka's agility was high as the first ranked archer, but she wasn't faster than Grid. This was because the movements of the sword linked together faster than the firing of the arrow.

[The target has received 29,300 damage.]

[The target has received 25,760 damage.]

Jishuka allowed only two blows yet she lost more than half her health. She used her quiver and bow to stop a few energy blades, using the natural rebound to dodge a few more. The distance between Grid and Jishuka increased again while a trap was installed at Grid's feet.

Then the trap activated and wrapped around Grid's ankles. The trap lasted for five seconds, and anyone who tried to move from it might have their ankles torn.

However, Grid ignored it and ran forward. Now Moving Fortress was activated. A trap couldn't break the fortress at all.

"Too cool," Jishuka's voice thickened. She was becoming more and more immersed in the dual charm of Grid's sexy brain and his toughness. Thus, she was sincerely sorry. If only it wasn't for the debt... If her relationship with Grid wasn't that of creditor and debtor, she would be able to communicate this boiling emotion.

'I will just seem like a snake if I communicate my feelings.' Jishuka smiled bitterly and drew her bow with

all her power. Grid was someone who couldn't be caught by traps. She couldn't win. Even so, she would cause some damage before she died. This was her distinct pride—the last pride of a beast.

Jishuka concentrated all her resources and fired her last arrow at Grid who was chasing her. Her point of aim was different from before. The arrow was aimed at the center of the armor, not the seams of the armor. She fired the arrow from a close range, and the arrow that touched his armor caused Grid to get the chills.

Valhalla of Infinite Affection's current durability was 30, and it would last for one minute. This was the penalty of Moving Fortress. Wouldn't Valhalla of Infinite Affection turn into rags because of his arrow? It couldn't last.

Grid decided that he should activate Freely Move, which had been left as a trump card. However, the arrow was fired right in front of his nose. Jishuka's arrow pierced through Valhalla, and it shattered into thousands of fragments. It was a result caused by Jishuka's ability to

read, judge, and act the moment she fired the arrow.

Unfortunately, Grid wasn't as fast-witted as her and didn't notice in time. He wasn't a chosen human being, a genius like Kraugel. The Enlightenment Sword, a weapon that was hard to determine if it was a spear or a sword, penetrated Jishuka's waist. It occurred almost simultaneously with Grid's armor.

[You have been struck with a serious blow!]

"I'm sorry, but I'm a proud woman," Jishuka apologized as she collapsed like a broken doll into Grid's arms. This wasn't an apology for her actions. Although the armor might not be the real one, Jishuka apologized for destroying Khan's work. It was why she had hesitated and hadn't aimed for Valhalla the moment she saw its weakness.

Grid read her mind and stroked her red hair. "I apologize for everything."

“Huut... Cough!” She slowly turned grey in Grid’s arms and soon ascended as a pillar. It was a sign announcing Jishuka’s death.

Shortly after she left, the white giant managed to beat the vampire and rushed toward Grid again. “Griddddd!”

While Grid had been fighting Jishuka, the other biggest threat—Zibal—had been facing Tiramet.

‘Tiramet is already dead.’

The magic machine was truly a monster. Was it possible to obtain the materials to make a magic machine from the production rewards? Grid thought this and opened the inventory. The items he took out were the Dragon Harpoon and hammer. Now that he’d lost Valhalla, he had no intention of fighting Zibal head on.

“Spear Shot.” The giant harpoon, which had been created to raid the drake during the 2nd National Competition, was thrown like a javelin. Raiders paused as the harpoon

struck its chest.

“You don’t intend to get out of there and fight?” Grid attached the chain of the harpoon to the ground using a peg and immediately disappeared. It was a spacious battlefield. The faces of the players were still shocked from the aftermath of the huge explosion.

Grid’s next target was Pope Damian.

‘Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle.’

Rotating like a spinning top, Grid crossed the battlefield. The Enlightenment Sword in his hand let out a terrible roar. Damian used a healing skill to barely recover from the wounds he had sustained in the explosion and cast a shield. However, his shield failed, just like Grid’s Valhalla.

“Scream,” the other name for Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle emerged from the mouth of the Demon King. Damian’s shield couldn’t even withstand the first strike and

shattered. “Ugh...!”

Damian summoned a large golden circle behind his back as a last-ditch attempt.

[You have died.]

He was already dead.

“Gridddddd!” Raiders was released from the bondage of the Dragon Harpoon and started chasing Grid again.

This time Grid didn’t avoid Raiders. The wind blew his ebony hair as he stood in place and stared at Raiders.

Zibal’s legs were soft from where he was sitting on the boarding seat.

Behind the half-mask, Grid’s eyes weren’t strained at all.

He was reminded that his explosion had destroyed Eat Spicy Jokbal’s fortress. It was as he had expected. The golden cannon accumulated a shell made of the Blue Dragon’s Breath and fired.

“Kuooock...!”

Then it happened just before Raiders reached the armorless Grid. Raiders' body was hit by the cannon and tilted heavily. There was a magnetic field, and the surging currents shook Raiders' movements, rendering it unable to move.

“Grid...!” Desperation filled Zibal's face. He screamed because he couldn't change the flow of the battlefield that was formed after he inadvertently distributed the wrong information.

Grid's voice rang out, “You have shown a wonderful performance this year.”

“ ... ”

Zibal was a simple person. Two years ago, he had been badly defeated by Grid. The person who looked down on Zibal like a bug was now expressing appreciation for him. He didn't know if he should laugh or cry as Raiders was recalled. Then he climbed onto the summoned

pegasus and rushed toward Grid.

The other players followed behind Zibal. 80 surviving players descended on Grid.

The Demon King had lost his armor. The physical body that he had trained for many years was now just as injured as the bodies of the players. The players sensed that it was time to end this short yet long war. It was the same for Grid. He took a deep breath and quietly closed his eyes.

『 S-Surely, he isn't giving up? 』

『 He has no choice. His resources are at their limits, and he lost his armor. It won't be strange if he decides that he can't endure anymore. 』

The commentators discussed the end of the Demon King, while the crowd and viewers cheered. Then hundreds of stars appeared in the sky. Underneath it were Demon King Grid and the players heading toward him. Then

there was a bombardment. The 200 Magic Missiles Grid set up using the Alarm spell penetrated the players' heads and backs, shattering the ground. The players screamed at the surprise attack.

‘Noe, Randy, Can you Become the King of the Dead?’

A complete copy of the Demon King, a tiger surrounded by black flames, a lich, and a death knight appeared...

『 Ah... Ahhh... 』

In a few minutes, only two people remained on the battlefield. One was badly injured and couldn't breathe properly while the other person had no wounds. The person who opened his mouth first with a complicated expression was Sword Saint Kraugel.

“You have lost your immortality.”

“Yes. Everyone was too strong.”

“ ... ”

This wasn't a fair fight. Kraugel judged this and was about to take off his armor to stab himself in the heart.

It was the Demon King who stopped him. “Extremely honorable painting.”

Grid returned to the image from the painting. The image of the Demon King blurred, and the figure of the most famous person in the world was revealed. It was the Overgeared King—the Hero King.

『 G...rid? 』

People who were still dubious over the identity of the Demon King were shocked. The ratings of the Demon King Subjugation ran wild. The 1st ranked real time search query for every portal site was replaced with Grid's name.

Chapter 963

The extremely honorable painting was a product of chance. The best painter in the present day had been lucky enough to draw an extremely honorable painting. It was a great fortune for a painter.

How easy was it to make an extremely honorable painting? Picasso created the first new extremely honorable painting in 177 years and gained a high reputation, high level, and hidden quest achievement. On the other hand, Grid...

[Protagonist of the Extremely Honorable Painting]

[*One time limited skill.

When used, your information will return to what it was when the extremely honorable painting was made.

However, it will only be the stats and skills information. Additional information such as titles, class, status, race,

age, and so on aren't affected.]

...He only received this intermediate skill. This was a skill with a save-point concept. It could be effective in the worst situation, but the possibility of actually using it was low. The moment he returned to the save point, Grid would lose all the stats he had built up. Grid was never going to use the extremely honorable painting. He had convinced himself he would never need it.

However, the story was different on the National Competition's server.

[You recalled yourself at the time the extremely honorable painting was drawn.]

[The past memories, glories, and flesh will permeate the present you.]

[You have returned to the point when the extremely honorable painting was drawn!]

[Your level has fallen. All stats have fallen. Some skill

information has changed.]

The wind blew, and his long hair was gradually shortened. The fangs and claws that were like those of a beast became smaller. The muscular upper body became covered with black armor, and the pair of wings turned into a red cloak. The three horns on the forehead became a beautiful and graceful silver crown. Grid removed the image of the Demon King and returned to his appearance from the time of the extremely honorable painting.

He was clearly weakened. Grid had lost three levels. The blacksmithing skill and Pagma's Swordsmanship enhanced by the goddess' blessing returned to their pre-enhanced state, and Pagma's Eyes (Baal's Contractor Version) and the stats from the 234 random elixirs were all lost.

The main changes that caught Grid's attention were how the enhancement value of the Enlightenment Sword fell back to +1, the broken Valhalla was restored, and the cannon on the battlefield had reverted to the form of the

God Hands. It seemed that the extremely honorable painting didn't just affect stats.

In other words, the stats level included the effect of items that were being worn or in use at the time of the painting. Fundamentally, it was a skill to integrate with the figure in the painting. Thus, it was natural to return to his armed state in the painting.

‘It was just a few months ago.’

It felt like he had returned to a very long time ago. He was proud as he realized how hard he had lived. Grid first invested the remaining stat points he had saved and then used the goddess' blessing.

[295 points have been invested in agility.]

[Pagma's Swordsmanship Lv. 4 has been enhanced to Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship.]

[Mastering the swordsmanship has increased physical attack power by 40%, the chance of a critical hit by 50%,

and critical damage by 80%.]

[The time required for the footwork of the sword dances has decreased by half.]

“What is this?” This wasn’t a question Kraugel wanted to answer. He didn’t know how to answer it. It was rare for the always composed Kraugel to be shaken like this.

Grid’s recovery of his items and his damaged body was an unknown area that couldn’t be accepted by Kraugel’s knowledge and information.

“I will tell you one thing. There is no more bonus benefit I can get from continuing to play the Demon King.”

From now on, ‘Grid’ would fight Kraugel without any lies. That’s what Grid was saying. However, he didn’t mention that he was actually weaker because he had returned to a few weeks ago. It was only two years ago that Kraugel had fallen to level one, so it would be embarrassing for Grid to make an excuse for his current state.

First of all, he wasn't that greatly weakened. Most of the points from the elixirs had gone to dexterity.

“Go.”

It felt like he had finally gotten the right clothes that fit. Grid felt lighter after being restored to his original shape and took one step closer to Kraugel.

“Drop.”

The sky really fell. The swordsman used the authority of the sky to challenge Kraugel. As the Demon King, this was the skill that had made dozens of rankers fall into a crisis. Above all, the great advantage was that it was an instant skill. Kraugel defended against the sword. The White Tiger threw out thorns and resonated as it clashed with the Enlightenment Sword.

Duguen!Duguen!Duguen!

The present supreme person and the former supreme

person—in the midst of the flames and thorns, the sounds of both of their hearts intertwined as one. Grid felt deep gratitude along with extreme excitement. The reason why Kraugel participated in the 4th National Competition was due to Grid's request. It was his insistence that they play a final match. Grid was thankful to the Kraugel who had waited for this moment, even preparing to take on the world's criticisms so that this fight wasn't ruined.

“I won't disappoint you.”

“Yes.”

It seemed like they had made a promise. The two men simultaneously shook off the interlocked swords and made a big turn. At first glance, they seemed to rotate equally, but the intentions of the two people were completely different. Kraugel didn't deny the repulsive force and instead used it to strengthen his next attack. Meanwhile, Grid used the repulsion caused by the collision between swords to link the next sword

movement.

“Transcend Storm Sword.”

“Linked Kill.”

The shock wave that occurred at this time—from a blow to smash someone and a blow to cancel the other attack—rippled through the battlefield. On the slippery ground, the two men focused on each other without losing balance. It was like they were the only two people who existed on this planet.

The God Hands in the air fired Magic Missiles, while four swords spread out and guarded Kraugel. Suddenly, the weight of the White Tiger Sword increased, and Grid fell to one knee. Grid activated Fly from his kneeling position, and his pointy knee struck Kraugel’s chin.

Kraugel grabbed Grid’s ankle as he ascended, throwing him to the ground. Valhalla vibrated and emitted a poison. Kraugel rotated his sword, and the wind caused

the poison to go in the reverse direction. Grid activated Kill, and Kraugel used White Light Steps—which boasted hundreds of different paths—to dodge Kill by a narrow margin.

It seemed like Kraugel's counterattack would be blocked by Lantier's Cloak and fail to hit.

“Crying Tiger.”

Despite this, he moved beyond the cloak—making the concept of defense useless—and damaged Grid's body through Valhalla. Grid shook like someone trapped in a collided car.

“Full Moon.”

The sword moved in a circle like a full moon and devoured Grid's chest. Blood flowed down as Grid lowered his head. The camera couldn't catch his face, but he was smiling. He was happy. It was the self-confidence he had been longing for. He could see that his friend and

competitor was back on track.

The earth shook unceasingly. Kraugel didn't get a chance to breathe. Grid couldn't even wipe the spilled blood because he was busy avoiding and preventing sharp attacks. It was too soon to use the overgeared tactic of just hitting and hitting. The power of the White Tiger Sword that had grown to a unique rating was a threat to Grid. He couldn't face the sword head on because of the weight increase.

‘I have to be careful. Let's aim for a clear gap.’

Kraugel's attacks stopped. It was because he was forced to defend against Grid's instant skill, Unbreakable Justice.

“Weapon Ascension.”

The power was so great that Kraugel couldn't defend completely and started bleeding. He twisted his body and attacked Grid from bottom up. Grid avoided the

counterattack and stared up at the sky. The sword energy was soaring into the sky. The clouds were torn apart, and it interfered with the deployment of the Storm Demonic Energy Field. It was extremely creepy if this was what Kraugel intended.

Feeling thrilled, Grid used Link. It was faster than the Hero, so Kraugel had yet to fully adapt to the speed of the sword dances. He failed to block it with Control Sword and chose to dodge.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

He was already short of breath due to the quick collisions. The two men stared at each other without trying to show their tiredness. Kraugel placed the White Tiger Sword back in its sheath and took the posture of drawing the sword. It was an attempt to take advantage of the distance.

“ ... ”

A dopo with a yellow dragon embroidery on it—the flamboyant outfit fluttered in the wind, capturing the attention of people watching the National Competition. Two serene eyes stared at Grid through black hair that was matted with sweat and blood.

As Peak Sword had proven many times over the past few years, the posture of drawing the sword was no different from an archer pulling the bowstring. Grid would be a target even if he retreated back or rushed forward. He was already within Kraugel’s range.

Peak Sword watched the monitors with the eliminated players and spoke quietly, “...Time will flow again from the moment Grid moves.”

Time passed and the fight would resume. Peak Sword couldn’t bear to say that Grid was in a very disadvantageous position.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Kraugel and Grid were standing still. Only the four hands and sword floating over their heads proved that time hadn't stopped. They had been swept away by the explosion and had been fighting for a long time.

‘...Item Creation.’

Without taking his eyes off Kraugel, who was preparing to draw his sword, Grid used a skill. The Immediate Item Completion Scroll that he had obtained from the Reputation Store was in his inventory.

『... 』

“ ... ”

The commentators and spectators had already stayed

silent for a few minutes. In retrospect, there had been many hints. The S.A Group had always said ‘it will be a competition created by players’ when they discussed the 4th National Competition. The players who recognized the weaknesses of the four heavenly kings the earliest had been the Overgeared members. Additionally, Kraugel hadn’t fought alongside the players despite knowing that people would criticize him.

『 ...The puzzle pieces are aligned. The person fighting against Kraugel now is the real Grid. 』

Even after the Demon King used a skill similar to the Hero and even after Zibal shouted out the name ‘Grid,’ people still had not been able to admit that the Demon King was Grid. This was because their notion of ‘common sense’ would have completely collapsed the moment they did.

Now, they had to admit it. They could no longer deny the reality when the Demon King revealed his true appearance. It was now time to recognize and analyze

him.

『 Demon King Grid is much stronger than the current Grid. His health is 20 times higher than normal. He must've received many benefits after becoming the Demon King. 』

『 That's right. Otherwise, it wouldn't be possible for Grid to deal with 400 players alone. I think it is right to look at the current Grid as separate from the Demon King. 』

They were thinking with common sense rather than downplaying Grid.

“ ... ”

The crowd and viewers were silently focused on the game. They couldn't hear the trembling voices of the commentators. Regardless of whether the situation was rational or irrational, the important thing was the direction of the game. Grid and Kraugel—this was the third match between the former supreme player and the

current supreme player.

Who would be the final winner among them?

People from all over the world felt that this match was likely to be the last confrontation and couldn't help gulping.

“It doesn't matter who wins! I'm cheering for both!!”

“Waaahhhhhhhh!”

Now, the people finally realized that this was why they had been so interested in the PvP event. They had wanted to see Kraugel and Grid fight again. Yes, they had been looking forward to the story that hadn't yet ended, not the PvP event. Countless people had been waiting a year just for this moment.

“Take the win, Grid!”

“Win this time, Kraugel!”

“Aish, both of you should win!”

It was the moment that the biggest issue of this year, the Demon King Subjugation, became the opening stage for the confrontation between the two players. This was an unexpected result even for the S.A Group.

“I am worried that the names of the two people will overshadow the National Competition.”

“ ... ”

Yoon Sangmin was half joking, but no one laughed. The atmosphere of the executive boardroom of the S.A Group was somewhat uncomfortable.

On the other hand, the executive boardroom of the Daejin Group executives was festive.

“Grid is our car. No, he will be the face of our group.”

“Ohh!”

“Grid. No, God Grid will be my son-in-law.”

“...Ohh!”

Their reactions were surprisingly similar to the comments on the Internet...? The executives were embarrassed when they heard Chairman Lee Jinmyung say ‘God Grid’, while the president of Daejin Motors raised both thumbs.

“God Grid will be your son-in-law! As expected of the God Chairman!”

“ ... ”

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Chapter 964

A person who was praised—there was no saying that was better used to describe Yura. She had a great background and talent that encompassed all disciplines. Yura wasn't arrogant, and she had an upright character and an unparalleled beauty. Every innate element of hers made her shine.

Her achievements in Satisfy became her wings, and the responsibility she had shown by participating in the 1st National Competition alone while other Korean rankers had been absent made her a role model for others. Praise poured toward her constantly, and Yura had also been proud of herself. She had believed that she was doing well enough.

Yet these thoughts changed after she met Grid. Grid was a completely different type of person from Yura. He had lagged behind in luck and talent while suffering from countless adversities. He must've fallen down countless

times from setbacks and accusations and fallen asleep with tears.

However, he hadn't given up. Rather, he was tempered like steel. He had looked at the top of a hill when others were looking at the top of a mountain. While other people climbed 10 steps, he had taken one step. He hadn't stopped while others rested. Instead, he had gone up slowly but steadily.

All types of misfortunes had grabbed at his ankle, but he had endured without giving up. He had achieved some good luck and continued working hard without being complacent about that luck. Ultimately, he had finally managed to reach the top.

Yura had congratulated him sincerely. Knowing how long and how hard the road that Grid took had been, Yura truly respected him. She couldn't be the best even with her natural talents and knew better than anyone in the world how great Grid was.

On the other hand, she was ashamed of herself. She realized that no matter how hard she tried or how talented she was, she couldn't stand side by side with Grid. Yura's pride came crashing down. She couldn't accept that she wasn't the best, despite being born with better conditions than other people.

Thus, she tried and tried again. She had to get rid of this shame by proving herself. Then she would be able to face Grid. Still, in the end, she didn't achieve it.

“ ... ”

During the 4th National Competition, she wasn't satisfied despite having won gold and silver medals. No, Yura's eyes were shaking with despair as she watched the monitor. She discovered that the Demon King on the screen was Grid. Furthermore, Grid was in hell. He was facing hundreds of weapons, as well as humanity's booing and anger, alone.

“Why...”

Grid was stabbed by the spears and swords and quickly became bloody. Every time he screamed, Yura felt her heart ache.

“...Why are you going so far...”

Yura didn't know why Grid became the Demon King. It might be for wealth or honor. She just vaguely felt that he became the Demon King because he wanted something. Nevertheless, was it necessary for Grid to win to get what he wanted? Probably not. It was absurd to discuss victory in a 400-against-1 fight. Grid could get what he wanted without necessarily winning. He would have a contract with the S.A Group in the first place.

Yet Grid was now fighting to win. He couldn't move his fingertips and was screaming through the blood, but he didn't lose his fighting spirit and persisted. Yura could see the reason for it.

‘There will be someone fighting to protect you,’ Grid had clearly said so.

Since then, her grandfather no longer contacted her. The shrewd Yura knew what had happened behind her back.

“Why...”

Grid managed to pass the crisis. He created a huge explosion and slaughtered hundreds of players. After that, there was another struggle. There were 80 survivors left, and Grid squeezed out his last remaining strength to fight them. In the process, he went through several crises and even lost his immortality.

In the end, he managed to knock everyone down. Once the last enemy's health gauge emptied out, Grid stared into the camera before turning toward his old rival Kraugel. Beyond the broken mask, Grid's eyes were clearly gazing at Yura.

‘Believe in me.’ He looked exactly the same as when he said this to her in the past.

Yura was very pained. She knew that it was an unusual thing for Grid to be fighting for her. Everyone else

believed that she could do well on her own. It was because they thought she was a superwoman. However, Yura wasn't a superwoman. She could do better than others, but she couldn't solve everything by herself.

Her vision blurred as she formed fists. Yura didn't know when Viola came over, but Viola patted her on the shoulder. Viola thought Yura was truly delicate.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

The two men faced each other silently. Above their heads, the four swords and golden hands clashed tirelessly with each other. The people didn't know it, but both players had extremely exhausted mental states. Kraugel had to concentrate on controlling the four swords.

Simultaneously, Grid concentrated on reading Kraugel's attack timing while creating a new item in his head. Both

people were unable to achieve their normal levels of concentration.

The God Hands and the controlled swords collided exactly 89 times. One of the swords was hit by Magic Missile and fell toward Kraugel's feet. Grid noticed Kraugel's right shoulder lowering, and Kraugel pulled the sword out of the sheath. The moment the flash came in contact with Grid, he wore Doran's Ring. However, he was late by 0.1 seconds.

[You have suffered 18,500 damage!]

[Doran's Ring is equipped.]

The effect of Doran's Ring wasn't applied because the ring was worn after being hit.

“Kuek...!” Grid's face distorted as he stepped back and raised the Enlightenment Sword. The sword was recovered, and Kraugel's next swing at Grid was blocked.

[...The black flames have exploded!]

The flames struck Kraugel.

[The target has received 3,200 damage.]

Kraugel was already in the stage of communing with the Enlightenment Sword. The class effect of the Sword Saint saw through the Enlightenment Sword and reduced the damage of the black flames. He penetrated through the flames and kicked Grid. This was the moment when the effect of Doran's Ring was wasted. Doran's Ring only restored 900 damage from the kick.

At this time, Kraugel rotated in a diagonal line, and the White Tiger Sword rose from the bottom and aimed for Grid's chin. Even so, Grid succeeded in evading Weapons Ascension. He was able to read the exact timing using his high insight and the power of the Slaughterer's Eye Patch. The most important thing to watch out for when attacking a boss was an attack from the bottom. Grid was very strong against attacks from the bottom. He lightly twisted his head and tried to fight back with the

Enlightenment Sword.

“...?!”

A stone pillar that followed the path of the White Tiger Sword had already risen and struck Grid's abdomen.

[When attacked, there is a normal chance of 'Pillar' being released. The giant stone pillar has a blasting effect of up to five meters. The damage applied is 50% of the weapon's attack power.]

This was the pillar effect attached to the World Crushing Sword of the Noble White Tiger. Grid was thrown back and smashed into the half-destroyed organ. He hurriedly shook his head and stood up, only to see the sharp tip of a sword. It was an attack aimed for between his eyes. It stimulated an instinctive fear. It was an attack that a person had no choice but to respond to.

The grim looking Grid tried to stop the blade only to change his mind. He wasn't convinced that this was

Kraugel's most threatening attack. Just as it was about to pierce Grid between his eyes, the White Tiger Sword twisted its trajectory like Pinnacle Kill, only to be blocked. Grid's Enlightenment Sword blocked the White Tiger Sword's path.

“...” Kraugel's gaze sank as his move was detected unexpectedly. He tried not to express it, but he had already been surprised a few times. Kraugel felt thrilled from the moment Grid used Fly whilst on his knees and when he avoided the attack from the bottom twice.

The man in front of Kraugel was no different from himself. Grid was no longer the Overgeared King who compensated for his lack of sense, judgment, and ability with items. The Hero King had grown after winning against several heroes and continued to raise his experience. He had a different sense of pressure from the Hero, an artificial intelligence who could display his abilities to an excellent level.

Grid's current level threatened Kraugel's innate senses

and talent.

“Pinnacle!” Grid used the strength that was clearly superior to Kraugel and pushed back the White Tiger Sword.

“Tearing the Sky.” Kraugel counterattacked.

“Revolve!” Grid also responded.

However, Grid couldn’t shake off his uncomfortable feelings. Assuming that both players had one counterattack skill, the one who used it first would have the overwhelming disadvantage.

‘Did Kraugel create a new counterattack skill?’

A chill went down Grid’s spine as he was reminded that Kraugel could create new sword techniques.

“Quick Command.”

“...!?”

Black and white flashing wings appeared on Kraugel's back, and he disappeared from Grid's vision. The force of Pinnacle that was strengthened to the extreme from the two counterattacks cut the ground, and Kraugel reappeared on the cracked ground.

The White Tiger Sword was already cutting Grid's shoulders. Three times the damage overlapped. This was the power of Quick Command which was classified as one of the three offensive passive skills. It was a skill that ignored physical concepts by evading 'definite' attacks. He would then return to his original position after four seconds, and his next attack would do triple the damage.

As the name suggested, it was a very swift skill with excellent utility. However, depending on the situation, the restriction of returning to the original activation point could become a great poison. This restriction also allowed him to destroy a player's maximum strength skill by definitely evading one attack.

As a simple example, if he used Quick Command to

avoid a wide range skill that lasted more than four seconds, he would return to the same spot after four seconds and wouldn't be able to escape. It was incomplete, just like how Grid's God's Command had the fatal disadvantage of the 'probability.'

Of course, if Kraugel took the side of the seven malignant saints, the constraints would be lifted and the story would be different. Despite this, he avoided belonging to certain forces. He didn't stand on the side of the malignant saints or the gods. If he were to stand on one side, then he would've already joined a guild. Of course, there was only one guild that he ever thought of joining.

'Mine is XXX.' Grid didn't know any of this and gritted his teeth. From his point of view, God's Command was the best garbage skill. Grid had lost more than one-third of his health while Kraugel still only had minor injuries.

Everyone in the world held their breaths as the two men fought fiercely, not summoning any pets or drinking potions like they had made a promise. Even the bosses of

the chicken stores focused on the TV without realizing that their phones had been ringing for a long time. The energy of Wave broke the ground while the force of Splitting the Sky swept into the sky.

The battlefield gradually became narrower. The gap between Grid and Kraugel shortened while the number of collisions increased. Grid borrowed the power of the Slaughterer's Eye Patch to cut at Kraugel's waist, while Kraugel relied on Super Sensitivity to save himself from a fatal injury and cut at Grid's thigh.

Many people realized that Grid was in an unfavorable situation as the number of exchanges increased. Then Grid finished making the item and shouted like the protagonist of a cartoon, "Item! Production!"

『 ...? 』

“...?”

“...?”

Making an item during the battle...? The commentators, spectators, and viewers watching the game were sweating. It was so absurd that they were speechless. Regardless, it didn't matter.

“Blue Dragon Sword Breaker!” Grid shouted, and a bright light burst from his left hand. This was the moment that the dark blue sword with an electric current around it appeared in the world. The blade part was made from the remnants of Great Demon Astaroth, and there was a deep groove in the blade.

Kraugel's shaky eyes were captured by the camera, and all communities over the world were a mess.

-A sword breaker against the Sword Saint ;;

-Wow!A super cheap deadly move!

-That light...

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Chapter 965

The waiting room was crowded with players who had been eliminated from the Demon King Subjugation event.

“...”

Why was Grid the Demon King, and what did he gain in exchange for that? Perhaps he was monopolizing a lot of rewards? If it turned out to be preferential treatment, they would have a chance to raise some issues. The players' minds were in a very complicated state. There weren't only one or two problems to worry about.

Despite this, they were silent for a few minutes without discussing anything with each other. All the players were concentrating on Grid and Kraugel on the screen. They didn't want to miss the opportunity to see the power of the two people.

“....?”

A few minutes passed by. After a fierce battle, Grid seemed to be in a somewhat unfavorable position, and he pulled out a sword breaker. He cried out absurd words about producing an item, but it was just a trick to shake Kraugel as he seemed to take it out of his inventory.

A sword to break a sword...

It was obviously an item to counter Sword Saint Kraugel. Still, it was doubtful if it would work.

“No one is currently using that.”

“Unless a person has the relevant passive skill, it has limitations and is difficult to control.”

“Grid used it for only a moment a few years ago, so I don’t think he will handle it properly.”

Among the players, Jishuka asked Chris, “Isn’t this a dangerous decision?”

Jishuka was an archer, but she was well versed in

swordsmanship. It was because she was a woman who dreamed of becoming a supreme player. In order to apply different concepts to archery and to supplement the weaknesses of archery, she studied all possible fields.

“I think there will be a mishap.” Jishuka was anxious. Based on her insight, Grid fought in a way that faithfully practiced what he experienced and learned. The total amount of experience he accumulated was so high that he could cope with many situations, but his creativity was insufficient.

On the other hand, Kraugel’s movements were creative from beginning to end. It was no less than the experience that Grid had accumulated. Additionally, Grid’s stats and items had fallen a bit lower. This was already the fourth fight with Kraugel.

...Grid was likely to be on the defensive one-sidedly.

Talent—Grid needed to work hard to make up for his terrible talent. Grid’s control might be better than that of

other players here, but it was definitely below the level of the genius Kraugel. Although Grid brought out the threatening weapon that was a sword breaker, it was unknown if he would be able to properly take advantage of it. Kraugel could deflect the sword breaker, and Grid might have to pay a hefty price for using an unfamiliar weapon.

Jishuka bit her red nails. It was hard for her to shake off her anxiety because she didn't understand Grid's decision. Chris nodded and opened his mouth, "Hmmm, well... It is risky. If Kraugel is a professional racer, the difference in the skills is enough to call Grid a normal person with two years of driving experience."

"Isn't that too harsh? What do you think about our Grid?"

"No, I have no intention of putting down Grid. It is just a proper analogy..."

"Three years. Let's go with three years of experience."

“...Yes.”

What was the difference between two or three years of driving experience? Chris frowned, but he knew Jishuka's heart and that she wanted Grid to be treated even a bit better. Jishuka was a violent and scary woman, but she was clearly good bride material for 'Grid alone.' She would make an excellent wife. He shook his head.

Jishuka urged him, “Keep talking. If Kraugel is a professional driver while Grid is a driver with four years of experience...?”

“Three years... Yes, a driver with four years of experience and a professional driver—the difference between the two of them is obvious. But that's it.” A smile spread across Chris' face. “Kraugel's car is a Chinese car while Grid's car is a Ferrari.”

They were people who were the most familiar with Grid. Between having talent and being overgeared, which was the higher-level concept? It was being overgeared.

Ultimately, it was a fact that being overgeared was the best.

Grid proved this fact personally. Could he really take out an ordinary sword breaker after directly feeling that his skills were less than Kraugel's? It was certainly a Ferrari or a Lamborghini, and it would complement Grid's relatively poor technique. Chris was convinced of this.

On the screen, Grid's sword breaker clashed with Kraugel's sword. Then something magical happened. The sword breaker pulled at Kraugel's sword, and it slipped between the grooves in the blade.

“What is that?”

“Hah... What is that effect?”

“What the hell is that principle?”

The players trembled as they made a fuss. The scene was shocking. Jishuka clasped her hands together and shouted. Meanwhile, Chris' eyes widened, and he clicked

his tongue. 'Is it a Bugatti?'

[Blue Dragon Sword Breaker]

[Rating: Legendary

Durability: 350/350 Attack Power: 695

- * Attack speed increased by 40%.

- * Additional 50% lightning damage.

- * Additional 30% shadow damage.

- * Emits a magnetic field that has a high probability of attracting sword type weapons.

- * If a sword type weapon is pulled, there will be a decrease in the durability of the target weapon. If the target weapon is below the epic rating, there is a normal chance of the 'Weapon Destruction' skill activating.

Weapon Destruction completely destroys the target weapon regardless of the current durability.

- A sword produced by the legendary blacksmith Grid.

There are several deep grooves on one side to form a saw blade. The purpose is to block and destroy swords. All swordsmen in the world should be afraid.

The ‘Strengthened Blue Dragon’s Breath’ and ‘Astaroth’s Horn’ has increased the lightning energy to the peak.

User Restrictions: Level 300 or higher. Advanced Sword Mastery Level 1.

Weight: 280]

A sword breaker that flashed with blue lightning—its form was far from rigid or sharp. Its blade was short and didn’t seem suitable for attack purposes. Due to the fine grooves, the content of iron itself was lowered and the blade’s durability seemed poor.

However, it was enough to be threatening. There was no swordsman who didn't fear a sword which was born to break swords. Kraugel would've felt a great deal of pressure if he were an ordinary swordsman, but he was a Sword Saint. He was the master of swords and could handle them completely.

So, he wasn't shaken. Kraugel unleashed a torrent of swings and pressed Grid back. There was an explosion, and the White Tiger Sword headed toward the right side at the same time. Grid blocked with the Enlightenment Sword and attempted to grab the White Tiger Sword with the sword breaker. It was a quick and ruthless movement. Even so, there was a limit to how fast it could be.

Kraugel slid down the White Tiger Sword and moved his body close to Grid, striking Grid's left wrist with his elbow. The sword breaker, which was aiming for the White Tiger Sword, headed toward the ground while Kraugel pushed Grid's chest with a hard shoulder. Then he raised the White Tiger Sword up again.

Like a snake, the White Tiger Sword headed toward the Enlightenment Sword. He disturbed Grid's mental state and slashed. Grid backed away. A close-range battle was considered disadvantageous due to the difference in technique. Nevertheless, Kraugel didn't miss. He clung to Grid fiercely and didn't give him a chance to wield the swords in both his hands. Kraugel even wielded his fists, and his storm-like swordsmanship at close range caused the commentators to fall silent.

Despite this, Grid wasn't shaken. He became calmer as Kraugel's offensive grew fiercer. Most of the experience Grid accumulated had been from difficult combat. Grid fought better as the situation worsened.

'Divinity. Item Combination.' Grid gritted his teeth and triggered a skill. He combined Valhalla of Infinite Affection that he was wearing with Triple Layers. That's right. This was the combination of armor and armor. It reduced the physical damage he received by 30%, and any damage from cuts or stabs were reduced by 50%. The passive skill Sword Breaker was also created. The

critical features of Triple Layers were added to Valhalla.

All of a sudden, Grid's expression changed.

“...?!”Kraugel's eyes shook the moment he stabbed Grid with the sword.

[The target has received 3,880 damage.]

It wasn't just because the damage was greatly reduced.

[The durability of the Domineering White Tiger Sword has decreased by 25!]

The sword which Grid had made and given to Kraugel cried out painfully.

‘The sword breaker option has been added to armor?’

This was a bit dirty... The momentarily strained Kraugel stepped back. The Blue Dragon Sword Breaker, which had a very short length compared to the Enlightenment Sword, struck him. Of course, Kraugel wasn't beaten

easily. He tried to twist the sword breaker's trajectory by sliding the White Tiger Sword along the edge of the blade to avoid the grooves.

However, it didn't work the way he wanted. The sword that should be one with him didn't listen. The White Tiger Sword was pulled by an invisible force and stopped in place. It engaged with the saw blade part, seemingly attracted by a magnetic force.

'What?' Kraugel shivered. The sword breaker made swordsmanship unimportant. It was an absurdity that was even more deadly against those who were at the peak of swordsmanship. This was a predator that could destroy the concept of providence.

“Pinnacle Kill.”

The skill that contained a stifling killing intent fell toward Kraugel's chest. Kraugel was in a hurry and forcibly pulled the White Tiger Sword away from the sword breaker. However, the price of doing so was great.

[The durability of the Domineering White Tiger Sword has decreased by 153!]

“Kuek...!”

How did he lose more than one-tenth durability at once? Kraugel’s expression twisted, and he used Quick Command. The illusion of wings expanded, and he left the position intact. It was the development that Grid had been hoping for.

“Fly.”

Grid recovered Pinnacle Kill and rose into the air. It wasn’t to keep track of Kraugel. He was targeting the four swords that were fighting the God Hands.

‘Don’t tell me?’Kraugel paled as he read Grid’s intentions. Quick Command finished, and he returned to his original spot. Meanwhile, Grid destroyed all four swords facing the God Hands. The newly liberated God Hands fired Magic Missiles at Kraugel. Kraugel triggered

Sword Curtain and blocked it.

Then Grid's voice rang out, "Do you have 30 swords? Take all of them out."

Grid floated in the sky. His arms were folded as the four golden hands protected him. It was a very familiar look to the public. They felt he had become even more overbearing and arrogant than when he was the Demon King.

"Transcended Link."

The storm of energy blades swept the ground, and the God Hands holding Mjolnir flew toward Kraugel. Kraugel used True Clouds and Control Sword in an attempt to stop the God Hands, but Grid appeared like a ghost and destroyed all the swords. The fragments of the swords scattered about, reflecting Kraugel's face like it had been split into hundreds of fragments.

Kraugel was making an expression he had never shown

before. It was a confused expression.

“...It will soon end.”

The players sensed it. Their voices were clearly raised.
They had seen the ideals they should pursue.

Chapter 966

Kraugel—the one with achievements and a reputation for being beyond humans in different areas—was running away. He gained as much distance from Grid as possible. From the moment the effectiveness of Control Sword failed, it became hard for Kraugel to handle the four moving golden hands.

The God Hands wielded the hammer regardless of terrain or land. In Kraugel's field of view, Grid moved closer while being covered with the 100% accumulated fighting energy. Grid now overwhelmed Kraugel in both strength and agility.

A sword shot out from Kraugel's inventory. This was the deployment of Control Sword. It shot out and hit Grid. Then it got tangled up with the Blue Dragon Sword Breaker and shattered. Several swords had already disappeared. The battle was outrageously destructive. A more accurate representation was that Grid was one-

sidedly destroying things. He pushed Kraugel easily with the power of the God Hands while shattering Kraugel's sword with the sword breaker. Grid was like a god of destruction.

-...This is being overgeared.

-Isn't this a new work created by Grid?I wish he would mass produce it and sell it to me.

-Then I would sell my house to buy it.

-Do you live in a house worth 20 billion?

-Will he even sell it for 20 billion?It is said that the items Grid makes are only distributed within the Overgeared Guild.

-It is true that if you join the Overgeared Guild...

-Well, they don't accept just anyone.

The public's gaze didn't move from Grid's left hand,

which held a sword breaker with blue lightning flowing around it. Today, the sword breaker was the best sword on Earth and the world's greatest treasure. The object, which had been created by an individual called Grid, was being treated as a masterpiece and coveted by every person who was watching around the world.

In the waiting room, Peak Sword thought seriously, 'Grid's works should be used as the national treasures of South Korea.' This was why Peak Sword was the chairman of the Patriotic Association of South Korea.

Another sword was destroyed by the sword breaker. Kraugel suddenly stood still. He gathered strength in his toes and bounced up like a spring.

“...!”

'Fast.' Grid was very surprised as he belatedly noticed the situation after breaking a sword. Kraugel used White Light Steps and was instantly in front of Grid. Grid got such a fright that he got goosebumps.

“Meteor Sword.” An intense wave of energy was ejected from the tip of Kraugel’s sword.

Grid dropped down and stepped on land. “Kill!”

Under the pressure that was crushing his shoulders, Grid also used a skill. Naturally, it was done with the Enlightenment Sword. The basic damage of the sword breaker was slow, and the penalty it received meant that any skills released wouldn’t show their power properly.

The collision between Kill and Meteor Sword stirred up the battlefield. Shockwaves extended dozens of meters and knocked down the widely distributed marble columns. However, there was no ceiling here. The fallen pillars were merely ornaments supporting the air.

“Condemnation Sword.”

“...!?”

That was a skill which Kraugel didn’t abuse initially. It

was a fight between skill and skill while mixing in common attacks. This was the most effective means to utilize the effects of the skills while arranging the cooldowns. Yet, now, Kraugel was linking skills straight away?

Grid was slightly puzzled but then responded with Drop. Soon afterward, he started the footwork of Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle. His intuition sent a warning that it was dangerous. In fact, the power of Condemnation Sword was different from Meteor Sword. It was on a level similar to Space Sword.

The two intertwined sword techniques roared. Black flames and stone pillars appeared in full force. Two God Hands blocked the stone pillar that was about to pierce Grid's side. Then the two God Hands tried to smash Kraugel's face, only to be blocked.

After the aftermath of Condemnation Sword and Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle ended, Grid immediately swung the sword breaker to reduce the durability of the White Tiger

Sword. Kraugel reversed the White Tiger Sword and removed it from the influence of the sword breaker. He had already found the range of the magnetic field. Control Sword wasn't wasted any more.

The White Tiger Sword aimed at Grid's collarbone. It was the place where Valhalla and Triple Layers were combined, and there weren't as many barbs. The durability of the White Tiger Sword wasn't reduced. Kraugel raised his knees, pushed Grid away, recovered his White Tiger Sword, and used Space Sword.

'Ah!' It was only at this time that Grid could read Kraugel's intentions. Kraugel started using many skills in order to suppress the efficiency of the Blue Dragon Sword Breaker. It wasn't a bad idea. The sword breaker's attack power and durability couldn't afford to go against the skill.

Even so, there was a limit to his resources. Was it possible to fight with only skills?

“Freely Move.” Grid used the skill attached to the Secret Hero title. Last year, Grid had escaped from Kraugel’s Space Sword with this skill. This time, he planned to approach after avoiding Space Sword and then put an end to the fight using Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle that had its cooldown reset by God’s Command.

However, Grid failed to evade Space Sword. “...?!”

Kraugel’s Space Sword had been enhanced into a targeting type skill. It was the same as a legendary blacksmith reinforcing items by creating, disassembling, modifying, combining, and transforming items. Kraugel could configure his swordsmanship to change or enhance its performance. Last year, the ultimate sword technique that had lost to Freely Move was strengthened into a targeted skill.

[You have suffered 32,090 damage!]

[Your left arm has been cut off!]

[Your agility and strength have drastically dropped due to the loss of one arm!]

“Kuaaaaaak!” Between the earth and sky which were split apart, blood splashed as Grid grabbed his shoulder and fell down. The Blue Dragon Sword Breaker which had pressured Kraugel throughout the battle fell down along with the severed arm. Kraugel didn’t miss this small chance. He rushed toward Grid and swung his sword mercilessly. Every stab or cut shaved at Grid’s health.

[The target has received 4,120 damage.]

[The White Tiger Sword’s durability has decreased by 21.]

[The target has received 4,390...]

[The White Tiger Sword’s durability...]

The fragments of the White Tiger Sword mixed together with the red blood that Grid dripped. Grid’s health

dropped to the limit, and the White Tiger Sword was also heading toward destruction. The God Hands were once again caught by Kraugel's Control Sword. The battlefield was completely reversed.

『 T-This is unbelievable...! 』

『 Grid suffered a fatal injury and isn't even able to resist...! 』

The commentators' consternation echoed incessantly. Some audience members cheered while others were stunned. In the midst of the chaos, Grid was reminded of Yura's face.

‘I can't lose.’

He still remembered how he had gone to his reunion with Yura. Grid had been in a tremendously insecure state. Without her help, he wouldn't have been able to let go of Ahyoung so easily. Grid remembered when he suffered from hair loss due to tax problems, the hair loss

medicine Yura had given him had been as effective as the one Vantner recommended. He was grateful she had been there during his dark times. In fact, he felt that she had saved his youth, and he wanted to hug her.

‘She ran to the broadcasters every time in order to help me.’

He sometimes dreamed about the pleasant experience of them going to a restaurant together. Grid thought Yura was beautiful and never imagined that she could make such a cute face. For the first time, he became aware that she was younger than him.

...He didn't want to lose her. She should continue being next to him.

[You have lost 3,250 health.]

The White Tiger Sword was weakened due to suffering sustained damage to its durability. However, Grid's status wasn't great either. The shield effect of the First

King title, the healing effect of Tiramet's Power, and the blood-sucking effect of Cray's Power—Grid had consumed all the cards he could rely on during the battle that had already run for dozens of minutes.

Of course, Kraugel was the same. Kraugel had few cards remaining.

While the chairman of the Daejin Group and president of Daejin Motors shouted, while Yura's eyes became clouded, and while Chris discussed the Ferrari and Bugatti...

Both Grid and Kraugel had been fighting without stopping. They fought fiercely and mobilized all means in the process. The two of them didn't have any cards related to survival left. Yes, in terms of survival...

“Storm Demonic Energy Field.”

The clouds that Kraugel tore through at the beginning of the battle had long been blown away by the wind. New

clouds were now in place and were quite dense. It was enough to gather rain and lightning. In fact, this was what Grid had just seen. This was thanks to the loss of his arm. It was only after this happened that he looked up at the sky.

“...!”

Grid had less than 5,000 health remaining. Kraugel was dismayed as he was unable to strike the final blow. A lightning bolt struck the place where he was standing. It didn't end with this one blow. Lightning bolts aimed at Kraugel's crown fell several times after that.

Kraugel relied on Super Sensitivity to avoid them, allowing Grid to rise from his seat. Grid reclaimed the Blue Dragon Sword Breaker that was lying on the wet floor. He put the Enlightenment Sword in his mouth and held the sword breaker with the remaining arm.

Divinity was a skill that removed the casting and cooldown time of blacksmithing related skills. It could

only be used once a day, but it could be used up to two times in a single use. This meant he could use it twice.

‘Item Combination.’

The Enlightenment Sword and Blue Dragon Sword Breaker became one.

‘Item Enhancement.’

Grid attempted to use all the remaining enhancement scrolls in his inventory. However, he failed because he lacked time. Kraugel was already unleashing a series of strikes again. It was virtually impossible to deal with Kraugel while using the weapons enhancement scrolls.

“Crushing Sword!”

“100,000 Army Massacre Sword.”

The sword breaker had become one with the Enlightenment Sword. Now, it became a medium for great skills. The completely shattered White Tiger Sword

scattered all over the place, and Kraugel entered the Immortal State. The single-handed Grid might have his stats decreased, but the power of the 100,000 Army Massacre Sword and Item Combination that attacked a target 30 times was enormous.

Of course, Grid wasn't safe either. Crushing Sword was a skill that fractured the enemy's wrist and damaged an item. Grid's one remaining wrist was hanging limp. His remaining health disappeared, and he entered the Immortal State.

“Kraugel!!”

“Grid...!”

Kraugel brought out a new sword to replace the shattered White Tiger Sword. Grid tried to attack him in his defenseless and weaponless state, but his attack speed was slowed due to the fracture. He failed to counterattack, and in that gap, Kraugel once again pulled out a new sword. Once again, a sword was broken.

Another new sword...

Then one more broken sword...

This process repeated a few times, and the duration of Grid and Kraugel's immortality ended. Concurrently, all the swords that remained in Kraugel's inventory appeared simultaneously. There were only five swords, but this was threatening enough for Grid. The rain of swords poured toward Grid.

It was followed by Kraugel. He chanted the 'Poem that Praises the Sword', becoming one with the sword as he planned to stab Grid. However, he was blocked.

"Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle."

"...!?"

This was a skill that could be called trash if he had low luck. It was the variable called God's Command. The five swords were smashed by Linked Kill. Meanwhile,

Pinnacle fell toward Kraugel's body that was as solid as steel after becoming one with the sword. Kraugel's vision turned gray, and red letters popped up.

[The Demon King Subjugation has failed.]

Grid had won. A thrilled smile appeared on Grid's face as he spoke to himself, "Daejin Motors."

"...?"

Chapter 967

On the screen, the man left alone looked back at the battlefield. It was a battlefield without a ceiling. The place, which was filled with marble and ornate carpets, had turned into ruins. The hundreds of pillars supporting the sky had shattered into dust, and the grandiose organ had long become a pile of firewood.

“ ... ”

Overgeared King Grid...

Emotions crossed his wounded face as he looked at every corner of the empty battlefield. It was a strange expression like he would laugh or cry right away. He felt the joy of winning the battle and regret over the contents of the battle, as well as a thrill. A wide variety of emotions crossed his black eyes. There was a depth in his sunken eyes that caused a sensation among the public.

There were exclamations from all over the stands. Grid

was only 30 years old this year. He was a young man who hadn't hidden his feelings when he first appeared in the world. In just four years, he stood alone after this show. The world held its breath.

“...Daejin Motors,” Grid finally declared.

The hot chests of the people watching him cooled down.

-What did he just say? Does he mean to promote a company?

-...The second Comet Group.

-I'm tired.

There was a reason why Grid was the 'No. 1 model desired by advertisers' for four years running despite closing down his advertising activities. It was because he could completely capture the advertising industry.

The meeting of the Daejin Group employees was turned upside down. Reports were pouring in. It was reported that Daejin Motors occupied the top of the real-time search terms on portal sites of the six continents of Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Africa, and Australia. The entire world was showing interest in Daejin Motors and the Daejin Group.

Of course, it didn't matter if it was overwhelmingly negative interest. The noise marketing wasn't for nothing. It was meaningful that the brand was known all around the world.

“Yes!” The president of Daejin Motors got up and cheered while the presidents of other affiliated companies watched him with envy. The excited president of Daejin Motors shouted at Chairman Lee Jinmyung, “As expected of Grid! As your prospective grandson-in-law, it is normal for him to do extraordinary things. Still, how did he manage to promote it at such a perfect time...?!”

This was a state of excitement. It was a competition watched by billions of people, and their company was promoted at a time when the audience rating was the highest. They enjoyed a publicity effect that couldn't be bought even if they paid a million dollars.

Unexpectedly, Chairman Lee Jinmyung was calm. After all, he knew that he had to be careful when a big opportunity arrived. He leaned back in the chair and thought intently before saying to the head of the group's public relations team, "Don't release the promotional articles."

"Huh? U-Understood."

Right now, the world's attention was focused on Grid, so it was a perfect opportunity to promote themselves. Grid had refused to be models of global companies. Once word spread that he chose Daejin Group, the effect would be an astronomical promotional effect.

Lee Jinmyung had also agreed only to suddenly change

his mind. The head of the PR team was very confused, but he didn't dare ask for the reason as he got on his phone. The Daejin Motors president asked on behalf of everyone, "It is difficult for me to understand your keen insight. Is it okay to ask what you are planning?"

"I'm going to trust Grid. The words from his mouth are worth more than one thousand articles."

Chairman Lee Jinmyung realized that Grid wasn't an inexperienced person. He was a talent who managed to ascend in a new society called Satisfy. The chairman thought Grid was a dragon who had been born in Kaechon under the god of luck, but that wasn't it at all.

Grid had once described himself as stupid, but it was a terrible humility. Chairman Lee Jinmyung felt certain of it.

'Grid is a genius.'

They could take advantage of this situation dramatically.

Looking back, the timing of the proposed deal over Yura was very subtle.

‘Those deep eyes...’

This was a saying that couldn’t be used easily in reality. It was a phrase that would appear in novels. In fact, Chairman Lee Jinmyung had met countless people over the past 70 years, but he had never met anyone with deep eyes. However, the Grid on the screen had deep eyes at the age of 30. The ascension of the dragon wasn’t over yet. Chairman Lee Jinmyung noticed that Grid would reach a much higher level.

‘Maybe he is dreaming of an emperor...’

Duguen!Duguen!

Chairman Lee Jinmyung’s old heart was beating quickly. He felt a desire to become Grid’s wings. It wasn’t just because Grid was his granddaughter’s (prospective) husband. He was also attracted to the great individual

named Grid.

The atmosphere of the awards ceremony for the Demon King Subjugation was like a funeral. The Demon King Subjugation event had ended. The players had won five gold, silver, and bronze medals. They were rewards for the success of the four heavenly kings raid and their contribution in the battle against the Demon King. It was the ‘minimum’ reward guaranteed in the Demon King Subjugation. If they had succeeded in the event, three more medals would’ve been added and more players would’ve been on the podium. It was disappointing for the players.

Of course, not everyone felt that way. In the four heavenly kings and Demon King raid, Jishuka achieved the first contribution and won two gold medals. Thanks to her performance, Brazil was ranked ninth overall, so the Brazilians were in a festive mood.

Canada took second in the overall rankings thanks to Chris, who won one gold medal and one silver medal. The United States secured first in the overall rankings due to the activities of Kraugel and Zibal, and the atmosphere became heated up.

On the other hand, the people of China were overwhelmed with anger after losing their second place ranking and falling to fourth place. The Chinese participants hadn't won a single medal, so their ranking result was the opposite of Korea's, whose participants had won one gold medal. South Korea jumped from sixth to third place.

“We didn't even get in the top three this year? The continent's weather has plummeted.”

“Dammit... We were pushed by South Korea...”

“There is no need to blame anyone. The players were pushed by the S.A Group, not because of their abilities. In the first place, does it make sense for a South Korean

player to play the role of the Demon King? The competition itself wasn't fair. Our China is the true third."

The doubts and anger of the Chinese were reasonable. Demon King Grid had killed China's rising star, Mei Xiao, at the beginning of the battle.

A press conference was held amidst this turmoil. It was a press conference for Yoon Sangmin, the executive director of the S.A Group and a member of the National Competition's committee. He sat facing nearly one thousand reporters alone and picked up the microphone without the slightest bit of tension.

A reporter from CMM, the largest US news channel, asked the first question, "Many people are feeling doubts and have complaints about giving special benefits to Grid, who played the role of the Demon King. There is a consensus that the S.A Group is favorable to Korean players because they are a Korean company. How is the S.A Group planning to put their complaints to rest?"

“We can’t accept the complaints. We didn’t give any preferential treatment to Grid.”

“Huh?”

“We have adopted the Demon King Subjugation as a regular event. It will be held every year in the future and the role of the Demon King will be assigned to a qualified top ranker, just like it was done with Grid this year. There is a clause that says a player who has been the Demon King once can’t do it again. Thus, this is a clarification of the misunderstanding that the Demon King Subjugation event was prepared only for Grid.”

“Do you mean next year’s Demon King can get the same rewards as Grid this year?”

“Of course. If they achieve the same results, they will get the same reward. We have determined that the Demon King Subjugation event is suitable for the purpose of ‘a competition that joins players together’ and will guarantee many rewards for both players and the Demon

King. We hope that all players will enjoy it. The National Competition is a festival that promotes harmony in the world.”

“Will they receive the same stats correction?”

“Stats correction?”

“The stats correction Grid received when he took on the role of the Demon King. In fact, most people’s doubts and complaints were about the stats, rather than the rewards. It is the unanimous reaction from people that an excessive stats correction was the cause of the 1-against-400 victory. Next year’s Demon King will have the same correction effect as Grid’s Demon King, and people will complain once again. The Demon King Subjugation will become a festival for the few people ‘lucky’ enough to become the Demon King.”

“Haha, that’s funny but you’re mistaken. The correction effect that we gave to the Demon King is the minimum qualification to be called a boss monster—health.”

“...?” The CMM reporter was confused because of the unimaginable answer. While he was trying to interpret the question correctly, other media reporters quickly spoke up. “Does that mean you didn’t give any benefits other than health?”

“That’s right. The Demon King gains 500,000 health every 10 minutes until the gates guarded by the fourth Demon King are broken through. That is the basic rule for a ‘raid’, and it is an inevitable benefit.”

“If it is 500,000 health per 10 minutes and the total progress of the raid on the four heavenly kings was one hour and 38 minutes, does that mean Grid had a total of 4.5 million health?”

“Oh, Grid only received 200,000 health per 10 minutes.”

“Huh? Didn’t you just say 500,000?”

“That’s the basic rule. Next year, the player who becomes the Demon King will get an additional 500,000 health

every 10 minutes.”

“No, then why is Grid different with 200,000 health...?”

“Grid’s subordinates who acted as the four heavenly kings were too strong. We were forced to put constraints on Grid.”

“...?”

He was so strong that constraints were placed on him...? If the Demon King Subjugation was to be adopted as a regular event and held steadily every year... It meant that Grid alone had fought in a disadvantageous manner compared to the players who would become Demon King in the future. They thought Grid had received preferential treatment, but it was reverse discrimination.

In this sizzling atmosphere, Yoon Sangmin released data related to the Demon King Subjugation. Grid had only received 200,000 health every 10 minutes. The surprising thing was that the Grid on the screen didn’t

complain at all. He had been silent throughout the four heavenly kings raid and hadn't shown any response to the penalty. It was a clear attitude.

He wouldn't be the supreme player if he couldn't tolerate this much. In fact, he would be ashamed if he didn't sacrifice this much. Grid seemed to endure it with his spirit.

“...” The press conference was silent. The people around the world watching the press conference were also quiet. All of them were impressed by Grid's attitude. The one who broke the silence was a Japanese reporter. As soon as he had Director Yoon Sangmin's permission, he carefully asked a question, “You said that the identity of the four heavenly kings are Grid's subordinates... Are you referring to NPCs owned by Grid?”

“Correct.”

“Did they receive the S.A Group's support?”

“Yes, it is stated in the application form for future ‘Demon Kings’ that the four heavenly kings must be the player’s NPCs or pets. They have to use their own power to truly be the Demon King.”

“What correction effect did you give to the four heavenly kings?”

“It is like the Demon King. We gave them extra health to make it a raid. However, the exact correction figure will vary according to the level of the four heavenly kings. Thus, I can’t tell you the exact amount.”

“The other stats?”

“There is nothing. For reference, the four heavenly kings this year didn’t receive any health correction.”

“...Huh?”

Grid and the four heavenly kings—the monsters that killed 100 rankers each had been in their genuine

states...? It meant the NPCs owned by Grid were stronger than the 400 rankers. Moreover, wasn't Grid a king? He wouldn't only have four NPCs.

‘How much power does Grid have?’

‘Perhaps he can fight the empire?’

Yoon Sangmin's press conference was meant to quell the confusion, but it ended up causing greater confusion. The reporters' minds were filled with Grid. Yoon Sangmin's press conference wasn't over yet, but the reporters' gazes kept shifting toward the clock. They were waiting for Grid to enter the venue after Director Yoon Sangmin.

However, time flowed too slowly. Not long after the reporters felt like this...

Yoon Sangmin rose from his seat. Then a handsome Asian man entered the conference. “I am Grid.”

The reporters' anticipation was heightened because of his

determined expression which made him seem like he had something important to say.

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Chapter 968

“I am Grid,” Grid introduced himself in a simple manner and looked around the conference venue. There were maybe over one thousand people...? The reporters filled up the conference room like bean sprouts. Despite this, Grid wasn’t nervous at all. He was accustomed to this kind of situation as the king of a nation.

Grid leisurely examined the reporters’ faces before pointing to a blonde reporter. “Ask a question.”

The lucky person who got to speak first was a reporter for Canada’s national television station. She didn’t have positive or negative intentions toward Grid. Instead, she just showed her genuine passion as a reporter. That’s why Grid selected her. Grid read the reporters’ different intentions with a quick look and led the press conference to begin smoothly.

“I am Caroline from the CBC Cultural Department of Canada. First of all, congratulations on your win. Please

tell us how you feel about fighting against 400 rankers alone and winning.”

“I am naturally delighted.”

“Did you expect to win from the beginning?”

“That’s impossible. I was just lucky.”

“What exactly are you calling luck?”

First, the timing of Duke of Wisdom’s Magic Contemplation was too good. The players misunderstood that, so Grid managed to be safe from the magicians throughout the battle. The greater luck was that Kraugel didn’t engage in the fight. However, Grid had no intention of disclosing these facts. He didn’t want to expose his own limitations, and he also didn’t want to raise a topic that would cause Kraugel to be criticized.

“No comment.”

The question was passed onto the next reporter. “Director

Yoon Sangmin said that you weren't given any preferential treatment. The ability to reflect magic and summon the magic machine should be interpreted as your unique ability. Is that correct?"

"Yes, that's right."

Grid had revealed all of his powers in the Demon King Sjugation. It could be somewhat dangerous, so he started bluffing. He didn't explain the effect of Duke of Wisdom or that the magic machine was the result of copying rather than summoning. Instead, he just allowed people to keep misunderstanding.

'In the first place, they don't know about the item duplication.' It wasn't possible for anyone other than Grid or his aides to understand the concept of duplicating an item.

Then a sharp question emerged. "The appearance of your magic machine is exactly the same as Zibal's magic machine. Not only that, the emblem of the empire was

carved in the same place. Doesn't this mean that Grid's magic machine was originally owned by the empire? How did you get an empire weapon?"

It was a reasonable question, but he hadn't predicted it in advance. Grid was struggling to answer when a reporter made a guess.

"Did you receive a gift when you visited the empire with the emperor's invitation?"

"...?"

The emperor was crazy enough to give him a gift...? Moreover, it was an ancient artifact? It was absurd, but it wasn't unfounded. The Saharan Empire had been the first to propose the peace treaty, and Grid had visited the imperial palace at the emperor's invitation. Was the relationship between the Saharan Empire and the Overgeared Kingdom more special than the world knew?

The relationship between Grid and the emperor couldn't

be simple if the emperor gave Grid a gift. Grid was silent, and the reporters started typing because they interpreted it as a positive response. Articles such as ‘Grid has the Saharan emperor’s favor?’ and ‘The Saharan Empire and the Overgeared Kingdom are eternal allies?’ appeared on the Internet.

‘Well... I don’t dislike him.’

Certainly, Emperor Juander was a person different in comparison to what was known. He was a tyrant who dominated the continent in a violent way, but he had also given a great gift to Grid who would someday become his obstacle. The gift was Mercedes the legendary knight. She was much more valuable than the magic machine.

‘To be exact, it wasn’t a gift he gave me.’

The emperor had sent Mercedes to the Overgeared Kingdom for Piaro, not Grid. Tricked by Great Demon Astaroth, the emperor had declared his friend and loyal knight a traitor. Once he learned the truth, he sent

Mercedes to Piaro's side in the hopes that Piaro could spend his last years comfortably.

Of course, the emperor never imagined that Piaro would be a farmer and living well. Additionally, Piaro was still sharpening his sword of revenge toward the empress.

‘Piaro's heart is complicated.’

The third question was from a Chinese reporter. It was a reporter who stared at Grid with grim eyes from beginning to end. “In the early stages of the battle, you used a skill that brought hundreds of players to their knees. In that short time, you killed Player Mei Xiao. What were your intentions behind this action?”

The Chinese people hated Grid. Having defeated their hero Hao, Grid looked like an eyesore to them as he stood in the position of the greatest. Thus, the Chinese media couldn't be sympathetic to Grid. The Chinese media criticized Grid according to public opinion. It was reported that Grid did a malicious act against China by

assassinating Mei Xiao.

Of course, Grid also knew these facts. That's why he behaved more carefully. "Mei Xiao is incredibly good as a new generation player. Early in the battle, she was one of the most threatening players, so she was the first target. If I failed to kill her, I definitely would've been defeated in the Demon King Sjugation."

"...Are you acknowledging Mei Xiao's abilities?"

"I think anyone would acknowledge her considering what she showed at the National Competition this year."

"T-That's right." The Chinese reported blushed and sat down like he was embarrassed by asking such an obvious question. Then he started to write an article with an excited expression.

The Chinese people watching the broadcast also softened their hearts. Grid showed a casual expression. He acted like praising Mei Xiao was as natural as flowing water.

The Chinese people became aware of two facts. Mei Xiao was a true rising star from China, and Grid had no prejudice or malice toward China.

-If he hated China, he wouldn't acknowledge Mei Xiao.

-Grid's favorite food is jjampong!Chinese noodles!

-Grid is pro-China.

-Simple fools.You are deceived by lip service.

-It is lip service to acknowledge Mei Xiao's skills?He is telling the truth. Why is it lip service?Aren't you an offensive jerk?

Looking at this, the offensive jerks were split up between China and Korea. The friendlier Grid was, the better the situation became. Since the loss of Khan, Grid became even more aware of this important fact. He should refrain from acting emotionally and making too many enemies. The effect was great.

A reporter from Argentina asked gingerly, “Did you kill Seuron first for the same reason as Mei Xiao?”

‘No, it is because Seuron spread rumors about hemorrhoids.’

...Grid suppressed the words rising in his throat and barely managed a smile. “That’s right. I was wary of Seuron, who becomes stronger as the casualties increase.”

30 minutes passed by. The questions and answered continued for a short period of time.

“You used a skill two times in a row. What type of ability was involved?”

“I will only say it is a hidden card.”

“Did you promise a one on one match with Kraugel in advance?”

“No.”

“It is rumored that there is criticism among a very small number of people in South Korea. They say the overall ranking of South Korea is lowered as a result of you participating in the competition as an individual rather than as part of South Korea. What do you think about this reaction?”

“I fully understand their feelings.”

“How do you rate Zibal who has returned after a long time?”

“I am impressed with his rapid development. He is one of the players to be most cautious about.”

“People are calling God of War Ares as the most likely candidate to be the next Demon King. What do you think about this?”

“I also expect Ares to be one of the candidates. The other one is Pope Damian. I think it is really scary if the gates are guarded by Rebecca’s Daughters.”

“The power of the Overgeared Kingdom has grown over the years. Do you have any plans to expand the Overgeared Kingdom?”

“Please only ask questions related to the National Competition.”

...And so forth. Time flowed on very smoothly. Reporters asked questions that the audience might be curious about, and Grid responded to them with skill. The ‘most viewed news’ all over the world was filled with Grid’s press conference.

The press conference itself ended smoothly. The reporters showed expressions of slight disappointment, but most of them wanted to maintain their relationship with Grid and didn’t ask any inflammatory questions.

At this moment, a reporter raised his courage and asked a question, “It is known that Grid has received offers to be an advertising model for Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Maybach, and other luxurious car brands. Then shortly

after the Demon King Subjugation ended, you made a remark that suggested you've signed a contract with Daejin Motors. Is the reason why they were able to grab you over the world's best brands related to Player Yura?"

Daejin Motors had become famous because of Grid's words. Now, everyone in the world knew the brand Daejin Motors, and they also knew that Yura was the granddaughter of the chairman of the Daejin Group. It was easy to make the relationship between Grid, Yura, and Daejin Motors. Still, the reporters hadn't asked blatantly because it was a personal question. Indeed, the sharp-eyed staff members were trying to pull away the American reporter who asked the rude question.

However, Grid stopped them. Surprisingly, Grid had been waiting for this question.

He faced the dozens of cameras lined up like a wall and pulled out the answer he had prepared. "I chose Daejin Motors because I personally like the new luxury King General Sys from Daejin Motors. Originally, I was going

to sign with a supercar that you know well. Then I happened to walk past a Daejin Motors car dealership and saw the King General Sys on display. I entered the sales office in a bewitched manner and tried it out with the recommendation of a friendly staff member. It was unbelievably beautiful and drove well. Of course, there was a part that was regrettable. It was released as a luxury brand, but the price was quite inexpensive compared to the world's top three cars. Thus, some of the specifications didn't satisfy me 100%. I wanted to have a King General Sys and put in an inquiry with Daejin Motors.”

“...What was the inquiry?”

Grid was openly doing promotion. The reporters knew the truth but had to ask the question. This was why Grid stopped talking at that part. Grid looked somewhat excited as he said, “Daejin Motors were willing to design the God General Sys just for me. I was impressed by the prompt customer service of Daejin Motors and decided to become their model.”

“...”The atmosphere of the press conference became awkward.

“What is the God General Sys? Did we decide to make it for Grid?”The Daejin Group employees doubted their memories. Grid was so earnest that it was confusing whether it was fiction or fact.

The president of Daejin Motors started sweating. “...We need to make it.”

“It is a car that the whole world will be interested in. It needs the best design and specs that aren’t lacking compared to the Rolls-Royce.”

“Yes...”

Along with protecting his valuable colleague, Grid got the advertising fees and a new car. Of course, the Daejin Group enjoyed astronomical advertising, so it wasn’t a loss.

“This great guy is helping me?”

After the press conference, Grid came out of the conference room and found Yura waiting for him. Had she been crying? Her eyes were slightly bloodshot. Her appearance stimulated his protective instincts.

“Are you okay?” Grid couldn’t help reaching out.

“Would you like to eat ramyun in my room?” Yura suggested.

Click.Click click!

The reporters who left the conference room one step later than Grid let out a burst of camera flashes.

“Eh?”

Unlike the embarrassed Grid, Yura stood close to him. The reporters looked like they had gained a scoop.

Peak Sword watched from a distance and asked Coke, “If

Yura and Jishuka fight, who will win?”

“I don’t even dare imagine such a thing...”

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Chapter 969

‘Did she come directly?’

Grid naturally wanted to contact Yura first. However, after the Demon King Subjugation ended, he was confronted with the Overgeared members who had come to the waiting room. Spending time with friends he hadn't met for a year in reality was also important to Grid. Then there was the inevitable press conference.

In the end, Grid had delayed making contact with Yura. He had meant to finish this press conference and go talk to her directly. There were many things he wanted to say. His heart was filled with a sincerity and warmth that had to be expressed.

‘Don't quit the game...’

Yet Yura came here directly. In the midst of a jungle filled with beasts hungry for a scoop, their prey appeared on her own.

“Would you like to eat ramyun in my room?”

Click!Click click!

It was as expected. There was a baptism of camera flashes as soon as Yura spoke. Grid frowned as he turned toward the flashes. Yura had suffered tremendous psychological pressure throughout the National Competition, and now she was being bullied by reporters. Furthermore, the current Yura had red eyes. It was obvious that she had been crying. He didn't know what type of rumors would spread if this photo were published in the articles.

“It isn't an official schedule right now. Isn't it necessary to get permission before taking photos?” Grid hid Yura behind his back and glared at the reporters. He had lived as the Overgeared King and was accustomed to such things. The aura of a lion shot forward. The surprised reporters seemed to take a step back.

Click!Click click!

It only lasted for a moment though. The reporters weren't in their right minds at the moment. Yura's face was pale, and she seemed to exist alone in a world bathed in moonlight. It felt like the world was falling apart every time her eyes shook. The peerless beauty of South Korea had awakened. Yura was a universal beauty when she smiled, but she became more than that when she looked sad. Regardless of their gender, the reporters were fascinated by her and were ready to sell their country if she gave an order.

“Everyone, if you don't act in moderation... What...?”

It was like seeing fanatics! The breathing of the reporters became rougher, and their eyes were bloodshot as they focused the camera on Yura. Grid felt like he had entered the world of a zombie movie.

“Player Yura! You put on a great performance in this year's National Competition but refused most interviews! Can I ask if there is a problem?”

“Do you think you will humiliate yourself when you encounter Player Zibal again at next year’s PvP?”

“Why did you come here by yourself? Did you come to pick up Player Grid?”

“Is your beauty evolving every day because of love? It has been four years since the rumors of a love affair with Player Grid. Have you been dating steadily?”

“Why don’t you break up?!!”

“When will you break up?”

They asked questions related to the National Competition, but then they brought up personal history. The reporters were going wild. They were halfway insane.

‘No, how many times do I have to say that we aren’t dating?’

He wasn’t dating anyone! Yura and Jishuka weren’t his

lovers! Grid had said this hundreds of times over the past four years, but nobody believed him. No matter how much Grid denied it, Yura was often spotted alone with him in reality while Jishuka was often with him in the game.

Furthermore, Grid didn't know it but Yura and Jishuka had never denied the dating rumors with Grid. Grid thought that he had to nail in the point once again. He didn't want the number of anti-fans to grow. Dammit! He had never even held their hands...

Well, no, he held their hands and supported them by the waist when they were drunk. In any case, it wasn't fair for Yura and Jishuka when they weren't actually in a relationship. Grid prepared himself mentally and shouted, "We aren't dating!"

Click!Click click!

"Not dating!!"

Click click!

“Yura and I aren’t dating!!”

“ ... ”

He shouted it as loudly as possible a few times. Then the camera flashes finally stopped. Other people dreamed of having a scandal with Yura while Grid was stubborn about his relationship with her. He even denied it. In retrospect, he had done this every time. The first few times, they thought he was just shy and embarrassed. Now that they saw Yura standing there like a stone statue without any light in her eyes...

‘Don’t tell me that Grid rejected Yura?’

A man rejected Yura...? This was nonsense. It was something that was impossible. The shocked reporters examined Yura’s complexion. She was already pale, but her face seemed to become even more transparent. It seemed to be proof of the reporters’ doubts.

“ ... ”

The reporters' heads cooled, and they quietly lowered their cameras. The staff members also tried to turn off the large cameras for broadcast that were installed in the rear. They judged that it was dangerous to dig into this personal history. If Grid and Yura were lovers as rumored, there was some room to get away with things. However, if it was different from the rumors, it would be a nightmare for the reporters. In the midst of the awkward silence...

“You are correct. We are only colleagues, not lovers.”
Yura started talking for the first time. Her voice was as beautiful as her face, and it made the reporters feel like they were sitting on a cloud. “I know that Grid also has a simple relationship of being colleagues with Jishuka. Am I right?”

From beginning to end, Yura had only watched Grid even when the reporters appeared, and her eyes were still fixed on Grid now.

Grid knew this was the golden opportunity to clear up all misunderstandings and smiled widely. “That’s right! It is correct! I’m not dating Jishuka!”

“So—”

“Huh?”

“I going to challenge it.”

“What?”

“I want to be your lover.”

“Huh? Eh?”

“...!!”

Grid never imagined he would receive this sudden confession. His cognitive ability couldn’t follow the situation. The wide smile was still on his face. On the other hand, the reporters were once again raising their cameras. Yura didn’t restrain them. It was because she

was a coward. If she let this moment pass, she wouldn't be able to raise the same courage again.

As the reporters watched, Yura took a deep breath and repeated, "Please date me."

"..."

Her ears were red. The reporters belatedly noticed that Yura's beautiful eyes and voice were shaking. Everyone knew how much courage it was taking her to say this. Without realizing it, they were cheering for her.

...Well, except for one person.

"A-Are you crazy?"

It was Grid. Of course, it wasn't because he didn't like Yura. He had a good feeling toward Yura from the day he first met her. Over the next five years, she became more and more likeable to him. To be clear, Grid had good feelings toward Yura. Putting aside her appearance, all her actions toward him had been excellent.

Nevertheless, there were too many things he couldn't understand. She was a peerless beauty. Her personality, wealth, and education were all outstanding. Why would such a great woman confess to him? Additionally, why would she do it here where reporters from all over the world were gathered like dogs? Grid felt like this moment wasn't real. It seemed like a dream.

Click click!

The reporters started taking photos again. There were also many reporters shooting videos. The blank Grid suddenly came to his senses. Yura's face was beet red while her trembling eyes kept swiveling around. Her breathing was rough, and she was sweating. She was almost having a panic attack. Even so, she stared straight into Grid's eyes. Her eyes were eager but sad as she conveyed her sincerity.

Grid could no longer turn away from reality. It wasn't easy to understand, but Grid had to be serious the

moment he knew her heart.

“Let’s go back to the hotel first.” Grid grabbed Yura’s small and soft hand before leading her away.

“Uh...!”

Click! Click click! The speed of the flashing accelerated. How good did Grid feel now? Maybe it was because he had no experience with holding the hand of the opposite sex.

The reporters wanted to capture Yura’s cute look as she turned redder after Grid held her hand.

“Chase them.”

“Hurry.”

“Yes!”

Peak Sword, Toon, Coke—the three men watching from one side of the hallway ran through the reporters. They

planned to safely escort Grid and Yura back to the hotel. There was a wide smile on the faces of Peak Sword and Toon. Grid and Yura seemed like cute children, so they felt somewhat proud.

Yura's room:

It took over 20 minutes for Yura's breathing to stabilize.

"Are you calm now?" Grid smiled as he sat in front of Yura with warm tea.

Yura nodded with a red face. "Yes..."

"Okay, then I have a question. Why the hell do you like me?" Yura had formally requested to date him. Grid knew it meant she liked him, and it wasn't as a friend or colleague. "An ugly, stupid, and bad-tempered person like me... Why would you like such a person?"

Grid swallowed back the words 'a woman like you' as it

might seem prejudiced against her. He tried to think as objectively as possible. It was hard to understand why this woman would like him. Of course, maybe it was due to his resources. There were many people fascinated by the character of Overgeared King Grid.

Yet what about Shin Youngwoo himself? In Grid's experience, Shin Youngwoo had never been attractive. Shin Youngwoo was different from Grid.

...Shin Youngwoo was a man who had never been loved before. There were many women who laughed, cried, or even avoided him because his facial appearance was ugly and disgusting. The women who didn't avoid him laughed and ridiculed him. Thinking about it now, it wasn't just a matter of appearance. His dark and selfish personality created a fundamental wall.

At one time, he thought that such a negative personality was created by the world but not anymore. It was his nature. Look at Damian. He had liked anime and action figures since he was a kid and was bullied. Despite this,

he was still so bright. Damian was loved by everyone.

“...”Grid’s expression distorted as he recalled the past. There were still wounds deeply embedded in his heart. They kept aching despite being wounds which had healed completely, apart from a few slight traces.

Then Yura’s voice came from her seat opposite Grid, “At first, it was just curiosity. It was during the days when I believed I was the best. I was interested in the person who didn’t fall in the end despite looking weaker than me.”

“ ... ”

The Doran and Irene rescue operation—this was back when Yura was still a Yatan Servant. ‘Immortality’ had been an unknown concept at the time, so it wasn’t strange for Yura to become intrigued.

“Later on, I felt compassion and empathy for you. I came to know your past that was filled with misfortune and

unhappiness. I wanted there to be someone else in the world who loved only ‘themselves’ and tried to help. I watched you occasionally. Then I discovered it. You are fundamentally different.”

Yura had lost her parents at a relatively early age and was alone in the world. She had witnessed how her grandfather had not shed a single tear at her parent’s funeral, and she had felt a terrible loneliness while being forced into an unwanted future. All types of pain were rooted deep within her heart.

“I was busy healing my wounds. I only loved myself and trampled others to turn away from reality.” Yura had destroyed the lives of countless people as Yatan’s Servant. Among them were Grid and Irene, and she was even afraid to mention the name ‘Doran.’ “But you... You might’ve been in greater pain and loneliness than me, yet you always fought to protect me.”

“That is a stretch. Now you’re only talking about a part of me. The things that you like about me are illusions

caused by misunderstandings.”

“No,” Yura stated as she put down her cup. Her eyes were no longer shaking. It was because she glimpsed Grid’s self-blame. She said firmly to Grid, “The things I said were just an instrument. The reason I like you is because you are Shin Youngwoo. Your tone, your smell, your personality, your habits, your facial expressions, and your face...”

They were all the things he hated.

“I like all of them.”

A five-year relationship was not short, and Yura had seen many aspects of Grid in the last five years. Thus, she liked him.

“...” Grid’s heart started to thump. Now, Yura was looking at him completely. There was a bright smile on her face. Had she ever shown such a bright smile before? She looked more beautiful than ever, and Grid lost his

soul momentarily.

“Do you know...? This is my first time saying it since finding out the truth... Well, you look really surprised.”

The nonsense entered his ears. Grid shook his head and smiled. “You are blinded.”

...He couldn't believe it.

Irene's face crossed his mind. There was a sense of guilt.

Yura saw his lost expression and got up. “I didn't mean to embarrass you. I just want you to know that I like you.”

Her answer meant that it was okay to slow things down.

“By the way... why are you holding a pot in your hand?”
Grid asked.

“I want to boil ramyun.”

“Ramyun? Can you boil it?”

“Yes, there is a recipe in the packet. I just need to wash the noodles and follow them.”

“Wash? Hey, give me that! Don’t squeeze the detergent and put it down!”

“The guest should sit quietly.”

It felt like the net around Grid’s heart had disappeared. Yura’s bright expression had been hard to see until now. Still, she should give him the ramyun packet first.

Chapter 970

Sigh...Sigh...

Slurp.Haaah...

“This is really...” Yura’s sweaty face was filled with pleasure. “It is really too delicious.”

Yura sucked up the last of the noodles. She didn’t know that instant noodles could be so delicious. Yura had never gotten the chance to experience it previously, so she didn’t know ramyun could be this delicious despite having read about it. Now that she tried it, she found it comparable to the chewy noodles and cool broth made by the chef of a five-star hotel. The flavor of the slightly unfamiliar seasoning stimulated the tip of her tongue, and a chill went down her spine.

“Additionally, you don’t need to wash ingredients and can cook it right away... It is simple...”

Feeling impressed, Yura wiped at her mouth with a napkin. It was a graceful gesture. It didn't seem like she was eating Korean style Chinese food in a hotel but rather a fancy restaurant in France. On the other hand, Grid had the atmosphere of a local Korean restaurant. He buried his face in the bowl and was gulping down the soup. "Kyah~ good."

Grid truly admired the taste of the ramyun he made. The amount of water had been just right, the eggs had been placed 1 minute and 45 seconds before turning off the fire, and the scallions had been placed eight seconds before turning off the fire. The perfect trinity was fulfilled, and this was the ideal ramyun taste.

'Isn't this steady progress?'

Certainly, he had grown. He was confident that he wouldn't lose in a ramyun cooking competition against a Michelin three-star chef. Grid was seriously distressed.

'Once I go back to South Korea, shall I cook jjampong?'

Would it be more delicious than the jjampong ordered from a Chinese restaurant?

‘Umm....’

Preparing food ingredients and investing time and energy in cooking—the original Grid would’ve been reluctant to do that. Now, Grid watched Yura’s face as she sat opposite him. He watched a person precious to him eat his cooking (?) and thought it wouldn’t be bad to take up cooking as a hobby in the future.

“Wait a moment.” Yura grabbed a new napkin and wiped at Grid’s mouth. A flowery scent struck the tip of Grid’s nose.

“...” Grid was worried about blushing. He was unable to calm his wild heart and sprang up from his seat.

“Yura...!”

“Yes...? Yes!” Yura was startled because Grid suddenly got up and called her name. She saw the red-faced Grid

breathe out from his nose.

Gulp. Yura swallowed her saliva. This was the Ramyun Effect that she had often heard about in dating. She had been hoping for this moment, but she had no experience with dating. Thus, she couldn't help being afraid. The moment Yura was trying to make a determined effort—

“I-I’m going to the bathroom.”

“ ... ”

Grid hurriedly left Yura alone and headed to the bathroom, then he checked the mirror right away. He was worried that he had chili powder on his teeth. However, Grid's teeth were healthy and had no gaps. Thus, it wasn't easy for foreign matter to get caught. His white teeth were glistening.

‘Am I handsome?’ Grid rinsed his mouth and carefully examined himself in the mirror.

It seemed there was no difference between his current

appearance and his appearance in the extremely honorable painting. He had treated the painting as a post-processed photo while Lael, the Overgeared members, Irene, and Lord had been amazed by it without showing any resistance.

‘Certainly, I often think I look better than before.’

He had been exercising steadily for four years. Compared to the days when he didn’t exercise, his facial features had filled out and he now looked good. The biggest change was his smooth skin that didn’t show any signs of acne. He had sweated for four years without missing a single day, and his skin had improved from excreting all the waste. Of course, sweating wasn’t enough for everyone to have better skin.

“Um...” Grid tried all types of poses. He tried a pose that showed off his wide shoulders, waist, and side.

‘...I look cool.’ A wide smile spread over Grid’s face. His self-esteem rose sharply as he gained confidence in his

appearance.

“Hum hum.” Grid washed his hands and touched his hair roughly. Literally, he was being really rough. He swiped through his hair three or four times. Despite this, Grid’s hairstyle was wonderful like the hairdressers of a Cheongdamdong beauty salon had touched it. It made his appearance even more brilliant. It was the same reason why he made ramyun well. This was the power of his dexterity. From the moment he connected to the game, he had worked without resting, and his delicate finger movements were engrained into his ‘muscle memory’. These habits were partly expressed in reality.

Grid emerged from the bathroom and headed to the living room, only to let out an impressed sound, “Wow...”

This was because the sight of Yura sitting in the sunlight in the living room was as beautiful as a painting. It had been a few years already, but he still couldn’t adapt to her beauty and lost his soul for a moment.

‘She has become prettier.’

By the way... It seemed that she changed into a new attire? He remembered that she was originally wearing jeans and a sweater, but she was now wearing a one-piece dress. Looking like the main protagonist of a movie, Yura’s long white legs caught Grid’s eyes.

“Are you going out?” Grid asked as he sat across from her.

Yura shook her head with a red face. “No.”

“I see.”

She probably just wanted to relax in a comfortable outfit. Grid thought it wasn’t a big deal and checked her schedule, “When are you going back to South Korea?”

“I wanted to match Youngwoo-ssi’s schedule. Take my plane.”

“Oh, that’s good. A private plane is very comfortable.”

“Just tell me and I’ll lend it to you at any time.”

“Really?”

In fact, Grid had worried about whether he should buy a private plane or not. He thought it would be better to have one when considering the benefit of convenience for his family. However, the prices of the planes varied depending on the model, model year, and interior design. The one that Grid wanted was worth over 100 billion won. Of course, he could buy it if he wanted to, but it was psychologically burdensome to spend such a large amount of money at once.

“Then I’m thankful. I don’t need it often, but I’ll ask if I have to send my parents overseas.”

“Yes! I’ll take care of it!” Yura’s eyes brightened the moment Grid mentioned his parents.

Grid looked at her strangely ambitious figure and

carefully brought up a topic, “Did your grandfather call?”

“...Yes. He promised to no longer discuss the issue of inheriting the company. It is all thanks to you.”

Yura had heard the details from her grandfather. Once she learned that Grid had tried so hard for her, she was happy and grateful enough to weep. Then a long conversation ensued. Yura confided in Grid about what had happened between her parents and her grandfather. She told him about how she wanted to fulfill her father’s wish and that she would do it through Satisfy.

“Youngwoo-ssi protected my dream. I’ll repay the favor, even if it takes the rest of my life.”

“Just stay by my side, and it will be enough.”

“By your side...”

“Let’s work hard to grow the Overgeared Guild together.”

“ ... ”

As expected, it would be hard to hear an answer today. Yura knew his heart, but she still felt greatly disappointed upon hearing Grid's response. However, she couldn't rush people's hearts. She fully understood Grid's position and vowed to wait. It was at this moment that...

“Who is it?”

There shouldn't be any guests, but Yura got up as the sound of the bell rang out. It was then that she made a mistake. Her grandfather had acknowledged her right to her own life, and she had confessed her heart to Grid. She hadn't done much today, so why had a great deal of her energy been consumed? The moment she got up from the couch, Yura felt dizzy and fell sideways.

“Are you okay?” Grid hurried over and helped her up. His big hands covered her waist and neck, and the expression in Yura's eyes changed. “Youngwoo-ssi...”

Gulp.

Duguen!Duguen!Duguen! Grid's heart thumped. He felt like he was going crazy because Yura's face was right in front of him. Grid couldn't repress his boiling desire, and he felt like the tightly pulled line was breaking. Irene's appearance dimmed for a moment. Grid lost control, and his eyes focused on Yura's lips.

“...?!”

“...?”

Then the front door suddenly opened. Feeling startled, Grid and Yura hurriedly pulled apart and turned toward the door. Grid immediately recognized the uninvited guest. His eyes were fixed on a certain part of the uninvited guest, and he hadn't even looked at the face yet. Grid was astonished as he belatedly confirmed the identity of the uninvited guest. “Jishuka?”

“Hello? What are the two of you doing?”

“Uh... T-That...” Grid tried to explain.

Meanwhile, Yura—who was still breathing hard—opened her mouth and asked, “By the way, how did you get in here?”

Jishuka smiled and pulled something out of her pocket. It was a knife.

“ ... ”

“...Huh, this isn’t it.” She put the knife away and pulled out a master key from her other side pocket. “This hotel is part of a chain my father owns. I used some of my connections. Is there anybody who doesn’t know about the relationship between Yura and me? I was worried because I couldn’t get in touch with my friend. Thus, he handed me the key.”

“ ... ”

“So, what were the two of you doing?”

Was it possible to burn people with only a gaze? As he

faced Jishuka's eagle eyes, Grid thought it was certainly possible. There was an awkward silence before Jishuka suddenly brought up some news, "Oh, I'm going to move to South Korea today. There is a rat who is an eyesore."

Jishuka stared at Yura like she was going to eat her. The leopard-like spirit stretched out, but Yura didn't shrink back at all. Instead, she said, "Welcome to South Korea. I'm looking forward to the National Competition next year."

"There is nothing to expect. I will participate in the same events as you, so the total amount of medals won't change."

"Are you being affected by personal feelings? It is an unprofessional attitude."

"Unprofessional? I'm not getting paid to play the game. Who is a pro? I just do whatever I want."

"It is about basic responsibility. As the representative of

our country, we have to distinguish between private and public matters.”

“You are talking about responsibility even though you acted so shamelessly.”

Sparks flew as Yura and Jishuka glared at each other. Grid was in the middle and couldn't regain his reason.

‘When did their relationship become so bad?’

“It has been a while.”

It was after the end of the 4th National Competition. Kraugel went straight to the best spearsman on the continent, Kirinus. He was a person Kraugel had met during the course of his class quest. Kirinus, who had been chopping firewood, recognized Kraugel and said, “It will be much easier and faster to become stronger if you chase Muller's shadow instead of taking this stubborn and slow path.”

Kraugel fell to his knees. “Sword Saint Muller said there were times when even he relied on a spear.”

“I heard that the sword, not the spear, is the strongest weapon.”

“I still want to learn the spear.”

Sword Saint Kraugel’s class wasn’t effective because of a single item—Blue Dragon Sword Breaker. Now Kraugel realized that there wasn’t only one road. Just as Grid used a variety of weapons depending on the situation, Kraugel believed that he should be able to handle a variety of weapons. He was also qualified.

“You have finally received enlightenment. Yes, the process of training is different, but combat eventually boils down to one thing. The process is just as important as the outcome. I will honor the reputation of the Sword Saint and respect your will.”

[A hidden quest has been created!]

Three years... It was a quest that required him to stay in one place for a whole three years. The quest meant his level was likely to stagnate. However, Kraugel accepted the quest without hesitation.

“Thank you very much.”

Kraugel didn't want to lose to his only competitor, Grid. He wanted to maintain his relationship with Grid forever by constantly advancing and demonstrating his skills.

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Chapter 971

One day passed after the end of the National Competition. In the meantime, all the media outlets in South Korea and elsewhere were focused on Yura's public confession. Public interest soared into the sky, and Grid and Yura's story spread on the Internet and SNS sites 24 hours a day.

-Aren't Grid and Yura arriving today?

-I guess they finally decided to go out.

-Ah, I'm envious.

-We have to cheer for them. How much courage did it take Yura to confess...?

-That's right. This is the true attitude of a fan.

The news of Grid and Yura's arrival caused thousands of people to flock to Incheon International Airport.

Broadcasters, reporters, and even ordinary people came to the airport to see the main characters. Unlike Grid's worries, the people didn't curse at him. Instead, they cheered for Yura's courage while accepting that Grid was worthy of being confessed to.

Once Grid's group actually appeared, the atmosphere cooled down sharply. The people calling Grid's and Yura's names shut up, and the reporters clicked their tongues. The reason was that Grid didn't come with Yura alone; he was also with Jishuka. Jishuka's arms were tightly linked with Grid's arm.

-...□.□

-Grid, that XXX...

The moment Grid's entry was relayed to the world in real time, and he got 10 million anti-fans. Grid got a chill down his spine as he faced the crowd with the two girls. He felt that the many people gathered at the airport were sending hostility and killing intent toward him.

‘...This is a sign of friendship.’

Jishuka was a close friend and colleague, so she hugged his arm. Yes, this was friendship, not affection. Yet he was currently receiving killing intent because he was mistaken as having the affection of two girls...?

‘It is unfair...’

Jishuka didn’t know Grid’s feelings and smiled deeply as she attached herself more closely to Grid. Yura suspected that Jishuka was the one who released the information of when they were returning.

Grid’s Village—this was the name that people given the area where the streets had evolved after Grid’s building was completed. There were six high-rise buildings finishing their construction next to Grid’s building, and one of them belonged to Jishuka.

“It is a good place.”

Jishuka’s building was right next to Grid’s building. Based on the structure, Jishuka also seemed to be using the penthouse as a home like Grid. It was too open though.

‘The distance in between is short, and the exterior walls are plain glass? If I turn on the lights at night, my place can be seen.’

The garden and swimming pool were completely exposed. The structure of Grid’s place meant people could peek in with one glance. Why did he place a high wall on the other side but not this side? Grid cocked his head and asked, “It will be completed in a fortnight?”

“Yes. Thus, I need to ask for a place to stay during the fortnight. South Korea is still strange and a bit scary for a woman alone... I’ll probably stay at a hotel.”

“Why bother with a hotel? Come to my place. There is

plenty of room.”

This was a friend who had flown in from faraway lands. He was willing to offer his house to her as a courtesy. A bright smile emerged on Jishuka’s beautiful face.

“Thank you, Grid!”

“D-Don’t hug me so suddenly!”

Grid was very exhausted. He provided a room and meals to Jishuka but lost his energy after just one day.

‘Do all South American women dress like this at home...?’

The absent-minded Grid sat in the capsule for a while before banishing his thoughts and logging in. It had been almost two days since he connected to the server. Grid first went to Irene. It was because Irene’s image had blurred since Yura confessed to him.

He was confused. Satisfy and reality were disconnected worlds. Should he feel guilty toward Irene because he liked Yura in reality? If he cheated on Irene because she only existed in Satisfy, could he really be confident that he loved her?

“ ... ”

Upon arriving at the palace, he saw Irene's beautiful side profile standing in the garden as she overlooked the pool. She was now older than him. Grid's heart hurt like his chest had been torn open.

“Your Majesty!” Irene discovered Grid and ran over.

Grid smiled bitterly as he approached and hugged her tightly. “There are many things I want to tell you and stories that I want to hear. Let's chat all night.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Irene buried her face in Grid's chest and laughed like the happiest person in the world. Grid held her tightly and realized... He couldn't betray her.

“I love you.”

“Your Majesty... There are too many eyes watching.”

Irene used to like this a few years ago, but she was older now and had to be careful of her dignity. Out of nowhere, Grid shouted in a loud voice, “I! Love! Irene!”

“Y-Your Majesty.” Irene blushed as she smiled at him, and they exchanged glances. The king and queen who loved each other deeply always set an example. That evening...

“You haven’t changed since the first day we met.” Irene paused as she walked through the garden with Grid. She had seen the depths hidden in Grid’s smile. The current Grid had a similar look to when he had been momentarily shaken by Sua. “I am mortal. I can’t stand by Your Majesty’s side forever.”

“Irene, what are you saying all of a sudden?”

“I want Your Majesty to meet a woman who can be with you forever.”

“Don’t say that.”

“I am sincerely saying this because I love Your Majesty.”

“ ... ”

Their times flowed differently. He was already prepared for it, but he felt frightened and resentful of her determination. Grid saw the sadness and determination in Irene’s blue eyes and vowed to never love an NPC again. Then he wept without realizing it.

Three days after the end of the National Competition, the world’s messages appeared in front of Lauel’s eyes as he was working.

[The marine Media Kingdom was destroyed.]

[The Saharan Empire has absorbed all the territories and rights of Media.]

[The survivors of Media have a great grudge against the Saharan Empire. Their desire for vengeance will last forever.]

[The Saharan Empire's momentum is rising sharply in a terrible manner! For the next 10 days, players from the Saharan Empire will gain an extra 10% experience and an extra 5% chance to acquire items.]

‘Media?’

Media was a kingdom that Lael had visited because the Behen Archipelago was located there. It was a small and beautiful kingdom with a considerable amount of wealth accumulated. Despite having been predicted to possess a significant number of elite troops, it had been destroyed overnight.

‘Did they use the magic machines?’

Lauel convened an emergency meeting. A whisper arrived as he was waiting for the 10 meritorious retainers. The person who sent the whisper was a big shot—the God of War, Ares.

-You can rest assured because my players have gained the White Dragon's Eyes first.

‘What are the White Dragon's Eyes?’

It was the first time Lauel had heard of them, but there was nothing good about exposing the absence of information.

-So?What is your purpose? Lauel inquired indifferently.

Ares replied, -I'm hoping for compensation.Reduce the price of the weapons that are traded with us by four times.

Since Grid received Hexetia's blessing, many blacksmiths had migrated to the Overgeared Kingdom, and Lauel had

thoroughly taken advantage of this. He almost exclusively monopolized the items market and received profit by raising prices. Frankly, it was a huge blow to Valhalla. It led to a situation where Valhalla couldn't properly arm the soldiers they recruited because the value of the items had increased by three times. Even if they used all the kingdom's money to purchase weapons, it would be insufficient.

Criticisms toward the Overgeared Kingdom and Lael came from all over the continent. However, Ares never condemned the Overgeared Kingdom. Grid had helped him in the past. However, Ares was also the king of a kingdom and couldn't keep being held back...

'Claiming compensation?' Lael's brain worked quickly. The destruction of Media, the empire that destroyed Media, and the White Dragon's eyes...

'The reason the empire invaded Media was to get the item called the White Dragon's Eyes. If the empire managed to get the eyes, it would've harmed us...'

It was imperative to learn about the White Dragon's Eyes.

-I will contact you after discussing it with King Grid.

-I will be expecting a positive answer.

Despite Lael's reserved words, Ares withdrew without hesitation. It was an attitude that said his side held the cards. Lael found it strange and immediately went to Sticks. The great sage Sticks was a cheat key. He naturally knew about the White Dragon's Eyes.

"The White Dragon's Eyes can reflect all types of powers."

"All types of powers?"

It was a hugely fraudulent item. Consequently, it was natural for the empire to covet it. So why did Valhalla intercept and take it? Why did Ares talk about compensation? Lael returned to the conference room

and consulted with the 10 meritorious retainers, but it was difficult to determine the answers.

Two hours later, Faker reported to him, “Media salvaged the White Dragon’s Eyes 10 days ago and the empire immediately obtained the information. Media tried to conceal it, but it was impossible to avoid the empire’s intelligence network.

“Hrmm...”

Why did the empire covet it so much that they destroyed a kingdom with hundreds of years of history overnight? Lael struggled for dozens of minutes before looking like he was hit by lightning.

“...The evil eyes’ king!”

“...?” The 10 meritorious retainers were confused.

Lael explained to them, “Species such as elves, dwarves, orcs, vampires, giants, the evil eyes, and the water clan are eyesores to the empire who are seeking to unify the

continent. Among them, the Saharan Empire is most wary of the evil eyes due to the power of the evil eyes' king."

Raising his hand, Lael covered half of his face. He revealed one eye while thinking about how wonderful it would be if a shape flashed in this eye. "The White Dragon's Eyes reflects all types of powers. What if it reflects the eyes of the evil eyes' king?"

"Will it be possible to destroy the evil eyes' king?"

"That's right. The White Dragon's Eyes can't enter the hands of the empire."

This was the most shocking fact.

"The God of War knows about the relationship between King Grid and the evil eyes' king. He knows that the evil eyes' king has a favorable relationship with King Grid, seized the White Dragon's Eyes halfway, and attempted to trade with us using it..."

“...” The room fell silent. They had all realized it. Lael pushed in the last wedge, “That’s right. Valhalla has excellent strategists. They are genius enough to read the positions of the empire and the Overgeared Kingdom before acting one step ahead.”

They were completely hit by him. It was the result of participating in the National Competition.

‘I won’t be able to participate in the National Competition again,’ Lael pledged as he determined what happened.

“We are now in a position where we’re being threatened by Valhalla. If we don’t listen to the demands of the God of War, the White Dragon’s Eyes will fall into the hands of the empire...”

“I roughly know the situation.”

While Lael was speaking with a serious expression, Grid entered the meeting room. He was wearing glasses

with lens as transparent as a jewel. The lens were also tinged a mysterious violet color.

“Don’t worry about the evil eyes’ king.”

“...?”

To think that Grid was showing up in sunglasses and grinning when the situation was so serious...? Grid explained to the baffled 10 meritorious retainers, “The evil eyes’ king will be able to control his eyes. There will be no problems with the White Dragon’s Eyes.”

The continent unification episode of the Saharan Empire finally started, and the Overgeared Kingdom became the eye of the typhoon right from the very beginning.

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Chapter 972

“What is that?”

The glasses that Grid wore had an odd aspect. The transparent gleam made it seem like they were made from extraordinary gemstones, but the black liquid that had a purple sheen was jarring.

‘What type of liquid was injected separately?’

It seemed like a wrong choice if Grid wanted the feeling of sunglasses. They weren’t practical because they interfered with the wearer’s vision.

“They will be the eyes of the evil eyes’ king.”

Did he need to explain things in words? Grid shared the item information with those gathered in there.

[Ether Glasses]

[Rating: Epic

Durability: 187/210

* Incomplete ether effect.

* Charm +80.

* Vision -2.

* The abnormal 'blurred vision' state will occur once per second.

The accessories maker Elizabeth, whose reputation has risen sharply in recent years, made these glasses by crafting ether diamonds.

The beauty of the ether diamonds is gorgeously expressed. It would be great if someone who wanted attention wore them.

The ether has a partial magical effect, and the field of view is disturbed because the ether is injected into the

lens. There will be some discomfort.

Weight: 5]

Glasses were classified as accessories, and among all the accessories, they were items that were easiest to wear.

“Try it.” Grid handed the glasses to Lael. That’s right. Items called glasses could be easily given to others by the owner. There was no transfer procedure. It was simple as long as the other party didn’t resist, since it had to be worn on the ears and nose.

[You have received the Ether Glasses.]

[Your eyesight has fallen. Your vision is blurry.]

“...It’s uncomfortable.” Lael wore the glasses and narrowed his eyes. The cloudy fog and ripples interfered with his vision. “The ether effect is incomplete.”

Lael took off the glasses and tried casting magic against the lens. The condensed wind on his palms struck the

lens. The lens didn't even crack, and there was no repulsion. The magic was extinguished like it was a lie. The word 'absorption' seemed correct.

“Indeed...”

“Wow! Isn't this great?”

Grid explained to Lael and 10 meritorious retainers who were admiring the glasses, “Ether is a substance from another world that absorbs magic power. Once the evil eyes' king wears these glasses, all the magic emitted from his eyes will be absorbed by the lens. Thus, the magic can't be reflected by the White Dragon's Eyes, and the possibility of destruction will be gone. The evil eyes' king will be able to see the world.”

Grid described it casually, but this was actually the core point. The evil eyes king had his eyes sealed from the moment he was born. The power of the evil eyes, which destroyed all objects it touched, was an amazing and powerful curse. He wanted to see the world. The item

that could fulfill the evil eyes king's earnest desire was the Ether Glasses.

“It is the best gift for the evil eyes' king. He will like you more than you think.”

It was an item that could turn the evil eyes king that even the empire was wary of into a perfect ally. Lael was convinced that the value of the Ether Glasses was astronomical. It was a treasure born from the combination of information from Kraugel, Elizabeth's techniques, and Grid's power in the Demon King Subjugation.

“Go to the evil eyes village right now. We must secure the evil eyes' king before the empire acts.”

The 10 meritorious retainers were motivated. They had a feeling that the grace period given by Ares wasn't very long. The 10 meritorious retainers expected that Valhalla was likely to consider negotiations with the Overgeared Kingdom as the next best option. Negotiations with the

empire could already be underway. Valhalla would gain a much bigger benefit from establishing a friendly relationship with the empire in return for giving the White Dragon's Eyes to the empire.

Lauel was immersed in his thoughts. "Certainly, we have to hurry, but I'm worried that the ether effect is incomplete. Is it because the ether effect is incomplete that the durability is quickly consumed?"

The durability was at 187 when Lauel received the Ether Glasses. Once it absorbed basic magic, the durability was reduced to 186. Grid nodded with a dark expression. "That's right. The durability is consumed every time it absorbs magic."

"Is the amount of durability reduced dependent on the magic power?"

"No, fortunately it isn't. I have experimented with Zednos and Laella, and the durability decreases by the same amount regardless of magic power."

“Then the amount of magic power emitted by the evil eyes king shouldn’t be a problem.”

“No, there are many problems. The magic power that is emitted from the eyes of the king is close to infinite, meaning this level of durability will only last a few minutes.”

“Infinite...”

“I don’t know if it is limitless or infinite, but I’m sure that it is inexhaustible. That’s why I’ve decided...” Grid opened his inventory and pulled out a new ether diamond—a palm-sized diamond with a small amount of purple black liquid inside. “I will go through the process of disassembling and reassembling the glasses made by Elizabeth in order to raise my understanding to 100% and gain the production method.”

Grid received seven rewards from the Demon King Subjugation (8 when including the Demon King’s Appearance event).

For three of the rewards, he chose the ether diamonds.

He chose only three for a few reasons. First, Elizabeth's help was needed to craft the ether diamonds and make the glasses. Second, after learning how to make Elizabeth's glasses, Grid could recreate the glasses with a higher quality.

Finally, the third reason was that Grid couldn't separate the ether from the ether diamonds, no matter what physical methods he used. It was a substance from another world, so even Sticks and Braham didn't precisely understand the ether. After some distress, Grid tried to separate the ether by destroying the diamond, but the ether that touched the air evaporated without a trace.

It meant Grid wasted one of the three ether diamonds he had obtained.

'I would be ridiculously overgeared if I could get pure ether...'

For example, what if he mixed the ether with Valhalla of Infinite Affection? Grid could gain more magic protection than the Duke of Wisdom. The magicians wouldn't be able to hurt Grid easily.

“Then we will first go to the evil eyes' village to protect the king. Your Majesty should join us after making new glasses.”

Although Grid had a portable furnace, it was better to make items in a smithy equipped with various facilities and tools. The better the working environment, the more likely it was that a higher-rated item would be created. Grid nodded. “Don't overdo it. There are some strong bastards in the empire.”

The surest way to deal with the empire was to send strong people such as Piaro, Mercedes, Noll, Asmophel, and Singuled, but nobody wanted to do that. Those people only had one life.

“There is still time in our truce agreement with the

empire, so it won't be a big deal. Don't worry."The reliable Lael snapped his fingers. A group of kids with chibi bodies poured in from outside the conference room.

The Destiny Guardians. They were the 16 evil eyes that Grid had rescued from the dungeon in the past and given to Lael as guards.

"You who wants to transcend and see into the past and future... We have responded to your noble soul and come to this place. From this moment on, we will defend your destiny. This is the fate that is weighing on the Destiny Guardians' backs... Kukukuk!"

"..."

The appearance of the evil eyes was chilling. It was because they spoke nonsense every time they appeared. The 10 meritorious retainers made embarrassed expressions while Lael swept back his bangs. His silver hair reflected the moonlight and seemed to scatter stars.

“My soul, trapped in solitude, is in a turbulent state as it faces your destiny. I pay tribute to the eyes covered by a black cloth and will ask you something in the name of Lael. Destiny Guardians, do you have the courage to encounter a furious storm of fate?”

“Kukuk... courage? It is one of our ‘sources’ that will never fade... Kukukukuk!”

“You don’t feel fear? Amazing! I can feel the power of language from your answer! The black dragon sealed in my arm is starting to move...!”

“Huhuhut... The master of the great evil eyes has never felt fear since being born. Even if the black dragon sealed in your arm wakes up, we will never back down... Eh?”
The evil eyes were talking excitedly for a while only to become shocked. It was because they discovered Grid standing behind Lael.

“Y-You are the symbol of a past life reincarnation who has made a connection with our great king that deals

with dark flames and white ice and sees the truth of the world!!”

“Grid!!”

The astonished evil eyes started sweating nervously and looked away. They were afraid that they would be dragged into a cave and given pickaxes if they met Grid’s eyes. When the evil eyes suddenly became mute, the 10 meritorious retainers couldn’t help feeling in awe of Grid.

‘What? Overwhelming the evil eyes species with his gaze...?’

‘He shut up the evil eyes who aren’t afraid of the world!’

‘My Liege! I respect you!’

In fact, the evil eyes were a very strong species, unlike their pretty appearance. The moment they released the seal on their eyes, they could harm or restrain the target just by looking at them. Yet even the great evil eyes

species would fall down before Grid. Anyone could see that Grid was amazing!

“...Then I’m going to make glasses. I’ll meet you in the evil eyes’ village as soon as possible.”

Grid left behind the silent evil eyes and ran to the smithy. He was resolved to make sturdy Ether Glasses.

‘If I can control his power, it will be an opportunity to recruit someone who might be stronger than Piaro. I can’t afford to miss this opportunity.’

“Wouldn’t it be better to wait for a response from the Overgeared Kingdom?”

The God of War Ares—the second player to build a kingdom after Grid—visited the empire with his military adviser, Sima Hui. He wore a deep helmet to hide his identity and was followed by the best players of Valhalla.

By the way, the person they were escorting was Sima Hui, not Ares. Of course, this was at Ares' command. He didn't want to lose a named NPC that he finally obtained after six visits to the East Continent.

“The Overgeared Guild will delay the answer as much as possible. The White Dragon's Eyes will lose their value if we wait for their answer.”

The reason why Ares and Sima Hui visited Titan directly was to negotiate with the empire. They were going to hand the White Dragon's Eyes over to the empire and establish a friendship between Valhalla and the empire. Ares wanted a friendship with the Overgeared Kingdom over the empire, but Sima Hui's thoughts were different.

“The Overgeared King is a highly skilled technician who restored the treasures of the reapers. Unless I am overestimating him, it is likely he already understands the substance of ether and it's likely he'll to use it to help the evil eyes king. He will be prepared for the White Dragon's Eyes and will have no intention of negotiating

with us until he sees some damage.”

“Isn’t that way of thinking too extreme? Like us, the Overgeared Kingdom thinks of the empire as the toughest challenge. They helped the founding of Valhalla to keep the empire in check. Why would they be so cold to us now?”

“They will be afraid.”

“Afraid?”

“Your Majesty’s ability to conscript and nurture your soldiers’ strength means it is inevitable that Valhalla’s power will soar into the sky. Cooperating with Valhalla to overcome the empire is like riding a tiger’s back to chase the lion. Thus, they will be worried even if the empire has been defeated.”

“ ... ”

Ares had felt it. He was intrigued by Grid’s ability to make items and had been trying to establish a friendship

with the Overgeared Kingdom because of the grace he had received. However, Ares became bitter as soon as he realized this, ‘The Overgeared Kingdom is very wary toward us.’

He was locked in thought for a while before speaking with half-closed eyes, “Okay. I will actively agree with your plan to strengthen our relationships with the empire and to consume the resources of the empire and the Overgeared Kingdom. I won’t hesitate anymore.”

“You have decided well. There is no need to be directly hostile to the Overgeared Kingdom just because we are holding hands with the empire for a while.”

“Umm... By the way, are we really going to the imperial palace? We might be bringing the White Dragon’s Eyes, but I am still the king of an enemy kingdom. Will the emperor truly meet us? I would be glad if he didn’t kill us...”

“We don’t have to meet the emperor. The grandmaster

has already captured our movements. He will probably attempt a meeting.”

“Grandmaster?”

“He is the most powerful person in the empire and has the authority to wield military power. His reputation from 100 years ago was so great that his name was heard even in my country.”

“Reputation on the East Continent...? 100 years ago? Huh, he seems to have a considerable degree of longevity.”

“He is a transcendent. Maybe you can think of it as a different form of immortality?”

“Transcendent...? Immortal? Do you mean a legend?”

“Well, it’s a little different.”

“...” Ares sensed the grandmaster wasn’t ordinary.

When he was just about to ask for more details, Ares was interrupted by a knight who approached them. “I came to meet you at the grandmaster’s command. Are you the king of Valhalla?”

Ares thought the knight was a Red Knight due to the red armor, but the shape of the armor was different. In the absence of light, the armor looked more black than red.

“Isn’t it polite to introduce yourself before asking about the other person?”

“I am Susan of the Neo Red Knights. I’ll ask you again. Are you the king of Valhalla?”

“ ... ”

Sima Hui nodded on behalf of the wary Ares. “That’s correct. You are speaking to King Ares, father of Valhalla and distinguished God of War.

“Follow me.” Susan guided Ares and his men to a castle.

She must have a considerable position in the empire as she led Ares' party toward a grand castle, which was too large to measure with one's eyes, without passing through a single checkpoint.

“...!” Ares rose on the horse for dozens of minutes and was speechless when he saw the appearance of the palace. The palace, which had been built with mysterious timber and stone, was shining with brilliant hues. It was shining brightly enough to break the boundary between night and day.

“This is the celestial palace where the grandmaster resides.”

The celestial palace! A palace where the emperor wasn't staying had such a grand name...? Ares found it hard to understand. He was filled with a greater vigilance as Susan urged him, “Come in.”

“My escorts...”

“They can come in as well.”

“ ... ”

Their weapons weren't even collected?

‘Is it impossible to harm the grandmaster at our level?’

How great was this person? Feeling nervous, Ares entered the palace. The grandmaster was seated deep inside the palace. His eyes slowly examined Ares.

“I was thinking that Valhalla's actions were unusually fast. So, it turns out that a precious asset of the east is serving Valhalla. It is nice to meet you. I think we can maintain a good relationship in the future.”

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Chapter 973

Making accessories was the realm of the accessories maker. No matter how good Grid was at blacksmithing, he couldn't make accessories unless he gained the relevant skills first. However, Grid had a way out.

‘Item Understanding.’

He only recently realized that item understanding was the most fundamental force and fraudulent concept of Pagma's Descendant. By observing, using, repairing, disassembling, and assembling the target item, he would achieve 100% understanding and gain the production method.

That's right. Grid could learn how to make accessories as long as he had the Item Understanding skill. Of course, he needed time and effort to increase the understanding of the item, but that wasn't a problem for Grid—master of labor. He was willing to invest days and months to gain the production method of necessary items.

‘Nevertheless, I can’t make all items just because I have the production method.’

The absence of the craftsmanship skill was a problem even if Grid gained the production method for the Ether Glasses. It was simply impossible for him to make the item without the relevant skills. However, Grid had a secret technique that could solve that issue. That’s right.

‘Item Modification!’

It reinterpreted items with a 100% understanding into a new form. Grid was planning to use this skill to integrate the Ether Glasses with a helmet or mask. By classifying the Ether Glasses as a defense item rather than an accessory, he would gain the ‘reasonable right’ to make the defense item.

‘Then I will cooperate with Elizabeth.’

It was the same as the Overgeared King’s Crown. The

crafting of the Ether Diamond was left to Elizabeth while Grid planned to increase the completeness of the item by adding it to a defense item. Item Modification was a skill with a limited number of uses, but this item was worth it.

‘I am investing in the evil eyes king.’

Additionally, he was looking forward to the defense item which would be made with the Ether Glasses. If a defense item with a high amount of magic resistance were born, he might be able to mass-produce it one day and strengthen the Overgeared Guild.

‘Okay. Let’s try it properly.’

Feeling motivated, Grid became absorbed in his work. As he worked on the glasses, his presence in the smithy for a few days was a great concern for Panmir—the first ranked blacksmith and chief blacksmith of the Overgeared Kingdom.

‘Shouldn’t he do something like hunting or questing?’

After the 4th National Competition, the levels of the players were rising like crazy. The gap was closing. As players levelled up, the gap between classes was reduced, and Chairman Lim Cheolho’s words were becoming a reality. The normal class rankers—who made up the majority of players—found hope at the 4th National Competition, and this hope became passion. The rankers, including the hidden classes, were dreaming of becoming the second Grid. The long-term experience gain buff from the National Competition rewards meant it wasn’t an exaggeration to say most players were hung up on hunting.

During this important period, Grid was spending all his time in the smithy while the 10 meritorious retainers were at the evil eyes village carrying out a mission. Thus, Panmir realized that the weight on their shoulders was enormous.

‘The more responsibilities there are, the more you have

to lose. I can't help feeling that it is really amazing.'

The Overgeared Kingdom would become stronger and never collapse easily. The confident Panmir also felt a sense of responsibility. He rushed through the dozens of smithies in the blacksmith district and encouraged the blacksmiths.

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

The hammering sound that lasted day and night was the symbol of Reinhardt and the Overgeared Kingdom.

Lepio was a small estate with only rice fields and mountains on all sides. It was one of the most popular secluded sites in the Gauss Kingdom, and people were very enamored with it.

"I never thought the evil eyes' village would be in a place like this. It's properly hidden. Won't the empire have a hard time finding it?"

“Kukukuk... Headless man. It might be hard, but I will personally correct your words. This place is the mysterious land where darkness and chaos co-exist, not the evil eyes village. We also aren’t hiding but have ‘sealed’ ourselves in. The world will perish if the power of the evil eyes goes on a rampage—”

“Am I a dullahan? Why do you call a person with a head a ‘Headless Man’? I can’t understand what you are talking about.”

“ ... ”

The rest of the meritorious retainers looked sadly at Vantner, who was shaking his head and scoffing. The only person who couldn’t understand the evil eyes’ words was Vantner.

Euphemina changed the topic, “It is a beautiful place.”

A desolate land where darkness and chaos co-existed...

The evil eyes village boasted a completely different landscape to what the 10 meritorious retainers had imagined. They had imagined a barren land where demonkin lived, but it was a pretty place with small, rounded houses.

“The roof colors would be prettier if the sun comes up.”

“Kukukuk. The moon is better than the sun. When we wash our bodies under the cold moonlight, the blood flow in our bodies is stabilized and the roar of the monster called ‘Me’ stops.”

“You are underground, so you don’t get the moonlight here, right?”

“...”

Regas’ pure question stung. The evil eyes—who had just been talking with great pride—flinched, and their shoulders drooped. The 10 meritorious retainers watching this scene clicked their tongues.

‘The evil eyes are weak against a tactless person.’

Then Jishuka brought things back to the point, “Let’s go straight to the evil eyes king. There is no time because the empire will likely attack in the near future.”

Faker and the Overgeared Shadows were already scattered throughout the village and searching. They were considering the paths the empire could use to invade the village and searching for terrain and objects that could protect it. A few minutes later, the 10 meritorious retainers—who were guided by the Destiny Guardians—arrived at the castle.

The castle was really small. The average height of the evil eyes was 1.2 meters, so all the buildings were small in size, including the king’s castle. The castle was barely 1.5 cm taller than the gates, so it looked miniature. Then it happened when all of the 10 meritorious retainers apart from Euphemina crossed the gates.

“We have been waiting.”

The highest ranking nobles of the evil eyes species—the so-called ‘ministers’ were waiting for the 10 meritorious retainers. All three of them were standing on the wall, sweeping their hair or placing a hand over their face.

“We know that you came here to defend our great king and that you are the subordinates of Grid, the only human who didn’t succumb to us.”

“However, we can’t just let you meet the king. We must make sure that you are qualified to meet our great king.”

“We know you aren’t enemies. The evil eyes king is an absolute presence that takes away the life and destiny of a man with just his eyes. If an unqualified person meets him, they will fall into the hell of eternity and eventually reach death. We have to test you. Submit.”

The three of them took off their eyepatches at the same time. Their exposed evil eyes turned round and round, disturbing the spirits of the 10 meritorious retainers.

[You have made eye contact with an evil eye.]

[Your spirit and soul is giving way before the mighty evil eye.]

[You have fallen into the ‘submissive’ state.]

[For 3 seconds from now, you will behave differently from your will!]

It was a three-second status skill. The time limit meant it was classified as a low-level effect, but the function was fraudulent.

“What is this...?”

Vantner started rubbing his head with both hands and barking like a dog while Jishuka behaved completely differently from her will as she measured her chest size. What if the evil eyes commanded the 10 meritorious retainers to attack each other?

‘Crazy...! This tremendous ability!’

The 10 meritorious retainers were honestly impressed by the evil eyes ministers, who were on a different dimension. They thought that not even the empire could pass through the gates they guarded. The evil eyes ministers said, “I’m sorry but you aren’t qualified. You can try to see our great king next time.”

“We are only doing this for your safety. Please don’t be offended. We have no intention of letting you enter, but we are thankful and appreciative. We’ll provide you with accommodation, so please do well in the future.”

“Protect our king and our village.”

The attitude of the ministers was surprisingly pure and favorable. They had also anticipated the empire’s invasion.

“The evil eyes people must have excellent books and intelligence...”Lauel shook his head whilst in awe of them. “It is hard to imagine the evil eyes, who live in a

closed off space with only a few thousand residences, having books or an intelligence network. This is probably the power of Future Sight. Huhuhut... It is a great species.”

“ ... ”

“Everyone, as I’ve already told you, the empire will invade here in the near future. Until then, our mission is to protect the king. It isn’t easy to wait for the enemies, but please remain motivated and responsible. We must not lose the evil eyes king.”

“I understand.”

Following this, the 10 meritorious retainers and the Overgeared Shadows settled down completely in the evil eyes village. They alternated patrols and took precautions to ensure the safety of the evil eyes king.

Three days later...

“You’ve gone through a lot of trouble.”

“From now on, we will join the mission.”

Coke, Zednos, and Laella arrived at the evil eyes village with 600 elite soldiers. The soldiers, who were armed with Grid’s mass-produced set, guarded the evil eyes village like steel bars.

‘We can stop a Red Knight easily like this.’

It was spectacular to see the gathering of the 10 meritorious retainers, including Faker and Yura—who were normally hard to see—as well as the elite forces. The Overgeared Guild wasn’t afraid of the empire’s invasion. They had the confidence to repel even a great demon.

‘This time, we’ll do our best without needing Grid.’

Chapter 974

It was the sixth day since the Overgeared Kingdom's troops were stationed in the evil eyes village.

“It is rumored that at least 500 million players belong to the empire,” Pon expressed concern over his colleagues' optimistic attitude about preventing the invasion of the empire. “Won't we be swept away if the empire issues quests to all the players?”

“...”

The atmosphere sharply cooled down. They imagined the scene of five million players flocking together continuously. How long could they hold out against the waves of enemies that kept coming?

“...I never thought of the players.”

Coke and some of the Overgeared members paled and shivered. Fear dominated them before Lael reassured

them, “Quests must have rewards. In particular, the rewards for war quests are several times more than normal quest rewards. It is difficult for the empire to release quests to hundreds of millions of players, no matter how much money they have.”

“Umm... Is it a problem for a nation to have too many players?”

“I can’t say it is completely good since there are many players who joined to army or were knighted. It is easy to move soldiers and knights who have to respond to a ‘certain duty’ without giving many rewards.”

“Soldiers... Why the hell do they want to enlist in the army in a game?” Peak Sword complained. As a citizen of South Korea, he had experience with military service. He didn’t want to go to the army again, no matter how patriotic he was. It was hard for him to understand the psychology of the players who joined the army. However, the other Overgeared members understood it well.

“Joining the army isn’t mandatory unless it is a special situation like South Korea. There are surprisingly many people who have fantasies about the army.”

“That’s right. They don’t want to join the army in reality, but they can at least do it in the game.”

“...Um.”

“That makes sense. Sometimes it is a disadvantage that so many of the Overgeared Kingdom’s players are Korean. They will never join the army even in the game.”

“Does it mean the Overgeared Kingdom’s ability to use the player forces is less than other countries?”

“Yes. This phenomenon will continue in the future unless Korea is quickly unified.”

“It is strange...”

To think the real world could affect the game this way...?
The Overgeared members were very interested in it.

“Let’s go back to work.”

It was time for their shift. The Overgeared members scattered all over the evil eyes village.

It was the 10th day after the Overgeared members were stationed in the evil eyes village.

“This is boring.”

“I want to hunt. Why can’t the empire arrive faster if they are going to attack?”

Vantner and Peak Sword, famous for their lack of patience among the 10 meritorious retainers, finally reached their limit. The evil eyes village was a completely secluded place underground, and it destroyed the human spirit because it didn’t have any entertainment or hunting grounds. The two men had been guarding the gate for 10 days, and they were bored and anxious.

“Everyone outside is probably hunting right now.”

“I guess. You will suffer if you don’t hunt during the National Competition’s buff period.”

“We aren’t hunting, so the damage...”

“If there was a hunting ground near here, I would’ve hunted after every shift but there is no hunting ground...”

“Hah...”

“Sigh...”

Peak Sword and Vantner checked the time habitually as they wanted their shift to end quickly. They wanted to log out, sit in front of the TV, and have a beer.

“Huh?”

Peak Sword and Vantner, who were standing in front of

the small castle where the evil eyes king lived, turned toward the entrance of an alley across the street. Three exceptionally short evil eyes were staring at them. The short evil eyes were less than one meter tall. Their faces were especially round, and there was a flush on the cheeks. One of them had a running nose with a long snot hanging from it.

“Little kids.”

“How cute.”

The evil eyes boasted cute doll-like appearances. Sometimes they had scars on their face and some were unusually ferocious, but they were still cute. People couldn't help smiling at their appearance. Then what about the young evil eyes? Peak Sword and Vantner smiled like fathers and waved to the children. They were surprised by the shy nature of the evil eyes children hiding in the alley. Peak Sword and Vantner felt they were even cuter.

“It is really nice as long as they don’t open their mouths.”

“Yes, as long as they don’t open their mouths.”

They recalled that first day when they arrived at the evil eyes village. Thanks to the Destiny Guardians confirming their identities, they had entered the village easily and had to face the enthusiasm of thousands of evil eyes. It had truly been hell. 1,000 people like Lauel had come up and talked to them. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say they had almost lost their minds.

It was fortunate they had prepared earplugs in advance or they might’ve fainted. The earplugs were developed to resist the curse. They hadn’t known that an item that was normally classified as a miscellaneous item would be so useful.

“The chuuni disease of the evil eyes king must be much greater. How much did God Grid suffer becoming friends with the king? God Grid is truly great. He isn’t a god for nothing. Ah, really... The first time I met God Grid...”

“ ... ”

Today, Peak Sword's cult worship of Grid began again. Vantner was taking out earplugs twisted from long use and stopped as he was going to put them in his ears. It was because the three evil eyes children were approaching.

“This point onwards is prohibited,” Vantner stated harshly despite the feelings in his heart. He couldn't relax his vigilance no matter how cute the evil eyes children were.

“It will be dangerous if assassins from the empire come. Don't hang around here and play elsewhere. In fact, don't leave your house at all,” Vantner warned coldly. Still, the evil eyes children lingered. They exchanged looks a few times before extending their hands which they had kept hidden behind them. In their hands, there were many candies that looked like ferns.

“Eat. This is something that all three of us risked out

limbs to obtain.”

“...Did you take candy that your mothers hid?”

“Kukukuk? What are you talking about? My mother can’t treat me badly. The power latent inside me is a violent guy who ignores the flesh of kin. Kukukuk.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about... In any case, thank you.”

These were the children’s snacks. Vantner and Peak Sword, who knew the evil eyes would be in great danger when obtaining goods from the outside world, only took one candy. Then they urged the children to return home. The children hesitated before bowing. “You are the first and last humans we have bowed to since we were born. You should be honored.”

“...?”

“...Thank you for protecting our great king.” As if embarrassed, the evil eyes children blushed and fled as

soon as they gave thanks. Peak Sword and Vantner stared at the children's backs in an upset manner.

“This is X.”

“...You planted a flag.”

Moreover, it was a death flag! This was a common development in manhwa and movies. The main character helped someone, then person who was normally cold suddenly thanked them... This was a line that signalled the time of death was approaching.

“Quickly contact Lauel... Kuek?!” Peak Sword urgently took the posture of drawing the sword. Two dark human figures appeared out of the air and blocked the children's way. The startled children hesitated, and Peak Sword and Vantner flew toward the children.

However, the two enemies who appeared were assassins with great skill. The daggers thrown by the assassins obstructed Peak Sword and Vantner. While the two of

them fended off the daggers, the assassins grabbed the necks of the evil eyes children. They intended to use the children as hostages, but their intentions weren't easily achieved.

Peak Sword and Vantner were strong.

“Where are you going?”

“...!?”The assassins barely escaped from the sword that flew toward them. The reason they didn't use the caught evil eyes children as a shield was that their mission was to capture the children. Peak Sword took the posture of Draw Sword and once again questioned, “What are you planning to do by catching these little kids?”

Of course, the assassins didn't answer. They took out daggers with the ‘explosion’ option attached and threw them. Vantner raised his shield to block the daggers. Then a powerful explosion occurred. The assassins believed that Vantner would be blown up along with the shield and were about to leave.

“These guys are truly X. Huhu.”

Something spun among the thick dust. It was a circular shield. The assassins crossed their daggers and blocked the shield. However, the shield was so strong that they groaned involuntarily. The silent assassins let out sounds of pain, and Vantner laughed as the shield returned to him like a boomerang.

“It is good since I was bored. Put the children down and fight properly.”

“Che...!”

The assassins couldn't fight properly. They were unlikely to win considering the power of the 1st ranked guardian knight Vantner and the 1st ranked quick draw swordsman Peak Sword. In any case, this place was full of enemies. The longer the battle, the more disadvantaged they would be.

The assassin cast a smoke screen. They intended to

escape from the city while Peak Sword and Vantner were confused for a moment. It was at this moment that...

“Sob. Look,” the evil eyes kid with the runny nose asked as he was caught by the assassin, “Touching my body, do you want to die?”

“...!”

There was a reason why the ‘advance teams’ had decided to kidnap the children of the evil eyes species. They thought the power of the evil eyes would be lacking because they were young. This wasn’t the case. The little evil eyes took off his eyepatch, and the assassin holding him froze.

“Uh... Uwaaaah...!” The terrified assassin tried to throw away the evil eyes boy, but it was useless. The power of the evil eye acted just by ‘seeing.’ It was the most irrational force in the world.

“This...!”

The other assassin was surprised by his now dead colleague and turned to the two evil eyes he had captured. The rope tying them together was so tight that they couldn't move their fingers to take off their eyepatches.

‘You idiot, you should’ve captured him properly like me!’ The assassin cursed his dead colleague and sneered. He was going to leave here before the smoke was completely lifted. By the way...

“...?”

Did the stealth skill not activate? The smokescreen that blocked the enemy’s vision became thicker and started to disturb his view.

“...!” The flustered assassin looked like he had seen a ghost. The two evil eyes children who had been tied up just a moment ago were now standing in front of him.

‘When did they escape?’

The smokescreen thickened like a fog over a lake at dawn. The assassin stood alone in the middle of this, and his confusion was maximized. He heard the laugh of the evil eyes children who had disappeared from view.

“Die wandering this fog forever. Kuk... Kukukuk! Kuhahahaha!”

“Uwaaaah!”

It was useless to scream and struggle. The fog just became thicker.

“Wow...” Peak Sword couldn’t close his mouth as he moved through the smokescreen. At first glance, the two assassins were obviously of high ranking. One had been completely frozen to death while the other screamed along as he fell into a hallucination.

“They even have the power to pull out the death flag...!”

The evil eyes species was absolutely amazing. They now

completely understood why Grid and Lael were obsessed with the evil eyes.

“The duration of the illusion isn’t eternal. I recommend taking them out in advance,” the evil eyes children said while pointing at the hallucinating assassin.

Peak Sword nodded before approaching the assassin and tying him up. They took off the assassin’s mask and revealed that he was an NPC. Even after finding out his identity, they could attack still him. In other words, these assassins weren’t affiliated with the empire. If they were imperial NPCs, it would’ve been impossible for them to be attacked due to the armistice agreement.

‘External groups were contracted.’

Peak Sword and Vantner examined the city. Fierce battles were taking place everywhere.

“Hrmm... What to do?”

“What can we do apart from staying here?”

Peak Sword and Vantner's mission was very important. Guarding the gate was equivalent to protecting the evil eyes king.

“It is dangerous. Don't go home and head into the castle.”

It happened as Peak Sword and Vantner sent the children into the castle. Dozens of people appeared out of thin air. The invasion of the 'advance teams' wasn't over yet.

“We'll take care of you first before protecting the evil eyes.”

Peak Sword and Vantner smiled as they faced the assassin group. Not a single bit of tension could be found in them.

“It's going to be super fun from now on.”

“Yes. It's more interesting because we were about to die of boredom.”

“...Crazy bastards!”The leader of the assassins frowned and gestured. The assassins struck the two people at once. Iyarugt roared.

Chapter 975

Chapter 974

Chris saw the odds of this mission succeeding as over 90%.

There were four months remaining on the truce agreement with the empire.

The agreement between nations was protected by the system so the empire and Overgeared Kingdom were unable to attack each other. The Overgeared members were guarding the evil eyes village and the empire couldn't attack wildly.

Even if the empire invaded the village, the Overgeared members just needed to guard the gates and they would be able to protect the evil eyes king until Grid arrived.

‘These villains from my past life!’

However, the empire took different actions than expected.

They indirectly invaded by using external forces.

Chris' expression instantly darkened.

‘Those villainous empire bastards, they intend to thoroughly consume our strength in this life, sealing the cycle of reincarnation and ending it all here!’

Chris quickly swung Grid's greatsword, the cross-shaped trajectory of the sword striking the upper body of the two assassins moving through the darkness and killing them.

The assassins with low defense were easily killed by Chris, who had the most powerful attack power.

‘Dammit, it is a mess.’

Chris jumped to the nearby roof of the mansion and shook as he watched the whole city. There were battles taking place all over the village and the assassins who

appeared in pairs were powerful enough to dominate two elite military units.

‘They easily cope with two elite units containing 100 high level players...’

Was this truly rabble hired by the empire?

Chris raised the power of the Tyrant and flew forward.

The further he moved, the more his attack power increased.

“Viscount Chris!”

The expressions of the Overgeared soldiers still looked threatened despite capturing the assassins. Chris appeared like the raging wind and saved them from the assassins.

Chris ordered the unit leaders.

"Assemble your troops at the castle of the great evil eyes

king who deals with dark flames and white ice and sees the truth of the world. It should never be breached, even if you must risk your soul being casted out of the circle of reincarnation or even destroyed.”

“Yes!”

Among the 10 meritorious retainers, Chris was one of the twin leaders along with Jishuka. It wasn't a problem for him to operate the troops using his own judgment.

The soldiers replied vigorously and saved another unit as they marched in the same direction.

In the meantime, Chris moved along the roofs towards the village centre while killing assassins.

The heart of the village was a small library. It was a place where Lauel, Jishuka, Pon and Regas were guarding.

The reason why the top rankers were gathered there was because it was one of the most important bases in the village.

“I have come to keep the promise of our previous life.”

Chris broke through the assassins surrounding the library and stood by Lael. Jishuka was covering him by firing arrows while Lael looked like he had aged 10 years.

"As expected, the empire seems to covet the knowledge and information which was sealed deep within the library to keep the world safe.”

“Certainly...”

In other places, the assassins appeared in pairs while there were dozens of assassins here.

Chris faced more than 100 assassins and wondered,

“What the hell are these guys? Are they slicing through the dimension itself, appearing from the dimensional gap out of thin air without going through the door? Not

even Faker who has unsealed the right arm of the God of Death can do that.”

“They are borrowing the power of the akashic records.”

“The akashic records... magic?”

“Yes. An excellent magician who has gained enlightenment and hatched out of their egg by breaking it can make the space itself weak, allowing people to warp in.”

“It doesn’t feel like Mass Teleport since they are scattered all over the place... Is it easy for a great magician to use this type of magic?”

“I don’t know about ordinary magicians but it is easy for a transcendent.”

“A transcendent...!”

One of the five pillars of the empire and the head of the Tower of Eternity.

Chris recalled the infamous Goldhit and was convinced.

“It is a fraudulent magic that grasps at the long forgotten thing called fear within me... How long can we last if troops keep being sent this way? Despite us being chosen ones born in the brightest day and the blackest night, blessed by both sun and moon, there is a limit to our stamina. We will run out of supplies and become exhausted, unable to unleash the full capabilities of our divine and sacred strength.”

Chris confided the anxiety in his heart. He didn't feel suspicious about why Lael hadn't anticipated the current situation.

It was true that Lael was intelligent enough to be called a genius but he wasn't always successful. It wasn't possible for Lael to cope with all the variables. He often failed and made mistakes.

However, this time was different.

Lauel didn't take this situation seriously.

“There is a limit to a transcendent's magic power, just as we have a limit to our stamina while being sealed in this weak vessel called a human body.”

“It is the same whether they are making a frontal charge or moving with magic. We can't stop it if troops pour in all at once.”

“Kukuku... There is no need to worry about a volume offensive. Hasn't this one shown his heaven-defying genius already when it was explained to you last time?”

“...?”

"Our enemies from the past life, despite being reborn under a forbidden star which granted them unimaginable wealth and power that they used to form what is called the empire, do not have infinite money. They will have to give compensation so they won't be able to easily pour in a lot of troops.”

"The empire will have to pay to move them? Can't the empire move them for free?"

Nearly every kingdom or group on this continent had been offering tribute to the empire for hundreds of years. They were complete slaves of the empire. Chris wasn't convinced that the empire would pay compensation for moving them.

Lauel explained.

"Do you know why existing groups have lived like dead mice without resisting the empire despite it being the enemy of the world?"

"...?"

"It is because they think the empire's power is infinite. The empire isn't in a position to show weakness. The moment the empire offers no money, other countries will question the empire's power and the dominance will weaken."

“That’s why they have to offer a reward every time they move outside forces?”

"It’s a commonly used bluffing system. The empire shines like the brightest sun, blinding everyone with their light, making people unable to see their faults.”

“There is something I can’t understand. Lauel, my companion of eternity, why do you keep saying that the empire is poor?”

It was strange.

This was the empire that dominated the continent for hundreds of years. The empire monopolized all sorts of resources and invaded other kingdoms.

Yet they were so poor that they couldn’t move some outside forces?

Creating quests for 500 million players might be too much but the assumption that it was hard to move

subordinate forces didn't make sense. It didn't make sense that the empire was poor.

Lael was quietly using magic while listening to Chris' questions.

He changed the wind direction to maximize the power of Jishuka's arrows while also neutralizing the assassins' throwing techniques. He also created an earthquake every time they approached, leading them directly to Chris.

Lael was fighting effectively despite having few combat skills.

It was a combat method that made people realize when there was the 'fight cleverly' saying when praising athletes and martial artists.

Lael's brilliant brain was creating a disaster for the enemies.

"I thought of something while watching the magic

machine in the National Competition. How much manpower and money did the empire invest in unearthing the ancient artifacts? How much techniques and money were poured in to restore and operate the ancient relics?”

“Do you mean that the empire is poor because of the magic machines?”

“No. The magic machines are just one of the causes. I just came to a more fundamental question.”

“Fundamental question?”

“If the empire is truly as wealthy as people widely think, it isn’t normal for them to struggle to suppress the Overgeared Kingdom and Valhalla.”

“...?”

“Can’t they step on the Overgeared Kingdom by constantly producing and dispatching infinite troops,

just as you claim now?”

“Ah...!”

Chris felt like he had been struck by lightning as he gained enlightenment.

Lauel was a person who was concerned about the empire’s tactics and he was also the first person to realize the limits of the empire’s tactics.

“You... You really are the number 1 unequalled genius under both heaven and earth...”

Lauel laughed at Chris’ heartfelt admiration.

"Time is fair to everyone."

As Grid grew, Lauel was also growing. He studied, thought, accumulated knowledge and developed his vision.

"I don't know what type of genius that God of War Ares

recruited.”

Lauel activated a pre-set trap to lure out the hiding assassins.

Then he laughed while covering half his face with his hand.

"That person needs to be ready to deal with me now.”

Lauel was convinced.

Grid and Kraugel had grown rapidly over the years.

They had an absolute force that made strategy and tactics obsolete and no one could be their opponent.

At this moment, grey pillars rose continuously in the evil eyes village.

They were the pillars that symbolized the death of the invaders.

‘That is...’

Chris and Lauel turned towards the south without speaking.

It was the direction of the city entrance where the grey pillars were occurring the fastest.

It was the zone that Yura was protecting.

Chris clicked his tongue.

"Lauel, even if your expectations are wrong, I don't think the empire can break through if they come."

"...I agree. Let's go inside the building. It is time to change shifts with our lifelong friends whose fate and destiny intertwined with ours through all eternity, the evil eyes."

"Okay."

The magic power of the evil eyes wasn't infinite, just like

a human's stamina isn't infinite. Unlike the king, ordinary evil eyes could only free the power of their eyes for two hours a day.

Two hours was enough.

“H-Hiik!”

“S-Spare me!”

The power of the evil eyes made even the coldest assassins kneel down and beg.

The evil eyes took care of most of the assassin remnants in just half an hour and then switched back to the Overgeared members, who had enough rest.

The empire's advance team was practically unable to do anything and collapsed.

“Kukukuk... You are decent. It is a power that is hard to be confined to the ‘framework’ of humans.”

“Hahaha... You didn’t buy people who are all talk.”

It was the 19th day since the 10 meritorious retainers left for the evil eyes village.

[Your understanding of the Ether Glasses is now at 100%!]

[The ‘Ether Glasses’ production method has been acquired.]

“Kukuku, it’s finally over.”

Grid, who was stuck in the smithy and wrestled with the glasses for 19 days, finally achieved his first task.

He had obtained the production method and could now convert the glasses into the form of armor such as a helmet, or face shield.

’Given that I can use it myself...’

A helmet was better than a face shield.

It was because a face shield and mask couldn't be used together.

Grid had no intention of throwing away the best treasure, the Slaughterer's Eye Patch which had been a great help during the Demon King Subjugation.

'I need a helmet that is at least worth the value of Triple Layers. Okay, let's combine the glasses and helmet.'

Grid decided to set the value to at least Triple Layers and used the Legendary Blacksmith's Reconstruction skill to change the Ether Glasses. Then he suddenly remembered the White Tiger's Breath.

'The White Tiger Sword summons stone pillars. Then can I make a helmet that is as hard as a rock if I used the White Tiger's Breath?'

There wasn't the saying as dumb as a rock for nothing.

It was a great opportunity to increase his defense if he made a helmet that was as hard as a rock.

‘...Um. Later, I’ll get one more Ether Diamond and insert the White Tiger’s Breath when making my own helmet.’

Four of the eight rewards that Grid obtained from the National Competition were the breaths of the sacred creatures.

Thanks to this, he had a total of one Red Phoenix’s Breath, one Blue Dragon’s Breath, one White Tiger’s Breath and two Black Tortoise’s Breath.

It wouldn’t be long until his weapons and armor contained the power of these sacred creatures.

‘Kukuku... Once I obtain pure ether, I will be the ultimately overgeared tower that looms above everyone, engulfing them within the shadow that I cast.’

Wouldn’t it be enough to fight against the empire?

“...?”

Grid felt a bit strange as he started modifying the item.

It felt like just yesterday when he was shaken by the ‘strong people of the era’ he encountered when visiting the empire and now he didn’t feel afraid.

Was he too puffed up?

No.

His impression of himself had risen thanks to that bastard Garam. He also became confident after his experience as the Demon King.

“Huehuehue...”

Grid thought about the power of the empire and checked the date.

It seemed the empire hadn’t invaded yet since there was no special communication from his colleagues in the evil

eyes village. Thanks to this, Grid could focus on modifying the item.

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Chapter 976

It was the 20th day of protecting the evil eyes.

“Stop the futile resistance!”

“You are the only ones who will lose if you keep fighting!”

Today, the enemies had come. Like the enemies on the first day and the enemies yesterday, they appeared out of thin air. Based on their chatter, the invaders had a common characteristic. They mistakenly thought they were strong!

“Ahahahat! Bring it on! We’re right here!”

“City guards! Overgeared Runman! Move!!”

“...Please don’t call us that.”

The Overgeared members were full of energy. The Vantner and Peak Sword duo were particularly excited.

Compared to during the 10 days of boredom, they were now full of joy.

Peak Sword used a new skill, Five Combined Strikes. Iyarugt flashed five times, and five attackers died.

[The experience of Iyarugt has increased by 0.1%!]

“Good!” Peak Sword snorted. The battles that occurred every day not only improved his skill proficiency but also increased his item experience. As he made a satisfied expression, Vantner crushed the enemy’s head with the mace hidden behind his shield and asked in an incomprehensible manner, “Why are you so obsessed with Iyarugt?”

“Eh? What are you suddenly saying?”

“Didn’t you get the gold medal rewards? If you ask Grid to make you a new sword with those materials, you can get a much stronger weapon than Iyarugt. Why are you sticking with it?”

In fact, Iyarugt had virtually been transferred to Peak Sword. It had been more than a year since he started using it as a flagship weapon and accumulating experience with it. It was very inefficient when considering that the experience rate of a growth item was slower than a snail. Wasn't it possible to get a more powerful weapon? Even if Iyarugt reached its final rating, was there any guarantee it would be stronger than a weapon made from one of the four sacred creatures? It was a mystery as to why Peak Sword was so obsessed with Iyarugt.

“Um...” Peak Sword felt that Vantner's question was worthy and thought for a moment before replying, “Setting aside the performance of the weapon, I expect the demonkin Iyarugt to be a great force. As you know, Grid has powerful NPCs, but he isn't actively utilizing them because their lives are finite. On the other hand, Iyarugt is classified as a pet, so I don't need to worry about him dying. I want to give Grid a new power by completely freeing Iyarugt.”

“Once you finish the final upgrade for Iyarugt, will you return it to Grid?”

“Of course. I’m a type of item surrogate.”

“Oh...” Vantner was at a loss for words. Peak Sword’s choices and actions were all for Grid. Still, Peak Sword had his own stance and life. How could he sacrifice a few years for others?

Vantner smashed the shield against new invaders that appeared and asked a new question, “What’s the reason to sacrifice yourself for Grid? I feel a lot of gratitude to Grid, and I like him. I am prepared to lay down my life for him many times. However, I can’t sacrifice a few years of time like you’re doing. I can probably never do that.”

There was a more fundamental issue than the concept of righteousness. Sacrificing himself for others without hesitation? It was really hard work and not something that everyone could do.

Peak Sword shrugged as Vantner gazed at him like he was a strange creature. “Well, the biggest thing is that Grid is Korean. First, there is the tax problem. In South Korea, the job of a gamer isn’t recognized for its costs, so they have to pay nearly 50% of the revenue and expenditure as tax. It is the same with the national pension and health insurance premium. In any case, Grid is dedicating half of his profits to the country every year when he has the ability to earn billions of won in foreign currency if he wants.”

“...Do you feel gratitude and respect because he is making your country stronger?”

“Yes.”

“Crazy... Are you the president? Why do you feel appreciation for that?”

“Don’t you know the heart of the Patriotic Association of South Korea?”

“Why is your patriotism so strong?”

“It is a patriotism that has lasted for generations. I always feel gratitude toward Grid and realize that helping he is a patriotic blessing. I’ll live for Grid forever.”

“In any case, you’re not normal.”

“Huhuhuhu. I’ve heard that a lot since childhood.”

“It isn’t praise... Well, I’ve might’ve felt like you if I had any homogeneity with Grid.”

“Grid won’t be bald, so you will never be the same.”

“You rotten person!”

It was the 22nd day of protecting the evil eyes.

“Uhh... Again...”

The Overgeared soldiers were becoming visibly exhausted. The enemy had been invading for over 10

days, and every time it was a sudden surprise. Thus, the mental pressure was severe. The main problem was that the basic skills of the enemies overwhelmed the soldiers. How many times would they have lost their lives if they didn't have the best quality recovery potions from the Reidan Alchemy Facility and Grid's mass-produced set? The soldiers were pale as they stared at the scars under the armor.

It was the 25th day of protecting the evil eyes.

“The soldiers are at the limit.”

“Aren't the reinforcements here yet?”

“The imperial troops have taken over Lepio Village. The road isn't open support troops can't enter.”

“Shit!”

The 600 elite soldiers of the Overgeared Kingdom were completely exhausted. They had already run out of potions to restore stamina, and their armor and weapons

had become rags from successive battles. Furthermore, there were no blacksmiths or smithies in the evil eyes village to repair them.

However, there was one point of comfort. No, it was a huge point. Since the levels of the enemies were high, the soldiers gained an average of 20 levels during the battle between the two sides. Some soldiers even reached level 300 and achieved their third advancement. The soldiers were becoming the top elites of the Overgeared Kingdom. If they could all survive and return safely... The military force of the Overgeared Kingdom would rise greatly.

It was now the 28th day of protecting the evil eyes.

“Open the way.”

“This place is currently being invaded by mysterious forces. We can’t let anyone enter the war situation.”

“Anyone? The great army of the Saharan Empire is called just anyone?”

The empire's regular troops arrived and tried to enter the evil eyes' village. The Overgeared Kingdom was forced to gather troops at the entrance, so they couldn't enter. The soldiers of the empire couldn't enter the city as the Overgeared soldiers blocked it.

This was the so-called roadblock. It was a strategy which took advantage of the fact that it would be impossible for them to fight each other. The first one to use this strategy was the empire. The imperial forces blocked all entrances to Lepio Village to interfere with the entry of the Overgeared army. This meant there was no way for the Overgeared reinforcements to enter the evil eyes' village below Lepio Village.

It was the 31st day of protecting the evil eyes.

“Uhh...”

The fighting spirits of the Overgeared soldiers had dimmed, but the imperial soldiers didn't allow them to leave. The intruders suddenly appeared and fought the

Overgeared soldiers. The Overgeared soldiers' armor and weapons were broken, yet their reinforcements had yet to arrive...

The continuous feeling of despair filled the Overgeared soldiers who had already begun to run out of physical and mental strength.

“ ... ”

The evil eyes people, who blocked the enemy from attacking the rear, had already been silent for two days. They were exhausted and had lost their ability to speak the dreaded words. On the other hand, the eyes of the imperial forces were relaxed. The despair of the Overgeared soldiers became greater as they were mocked of the empire.

Tatang! Jade magic bullets flew through the sky, and new invaders died as soon as they appeared. A beautiful black-haired woman declared to the soldiers, “You are safe.”

She would protect Grid's property, even if she had to die 100 times. Yura swore that to herself as she created new magic power bullets.

It was the 33rd day of protecting the evil eyes.

“Pant... Pant...”

The 10 meritorious retainers of the Overgeared Guild were losing strength. They were arranged in turns to allow for sufficient rest, but their items had a limit called ‘durability.’ As the small battles were repeated daily, their armor and weapons started to scream and their repair tool sets were used up. Their combat force fell sharply the moment they switched to sub-items. The enemies felt a bit stronger, and a large number of them started to intrude. They hoped for it to end, and they wished for their allies to come. However, they couldn't show it in front of the soldiers, and their mental strength was quickly consumed.

“ ... ”

The most ambitious Peak Sword and Vantner no longer enjoyed the situation. The situation wasn't very good. In order to enter the evil eyes' village, it was necessary to use space magic at the fountain in Lepio village. This was virtually impossible because Lepio Village was fully occupied by the imperial army.

“What now?”

“Tell us what to do.”

The Overgeared members started to rely on Lael. It was a scene that showed Lael's position. Just like Grid, many of the Overgeared members believed in Lael. No matter what the skeptics said, he was indisputably the one who had established the Overgeared Kingdom.

Lael shrugged. “We've done our part.”

“ ... ”

They had done everything they could? Was there no

solution left?

Lauel laughed at his frustrated colleagues. “It is over now. In the first place, our mission was to last until the time came. We did well enough.”

In Lepio Village...

“The cockroaches lasted for a long time.”

Was it a 10 year old child? A little girl was smiling cynically. It was a smile that didn't fit her age.

“Now they have reached their limits.”

A Black Knight standing by the girl's side said, “There was a report that side the enemy's spirit is completely broken.”

“I heard that a few days ago.”

“Haha, I told you that the enemy’s spirit had started to decline.”

“Hmm, now it is completely broken?”

“Yes, it is clear that they are at their limits. It is natural. Haven’t they been fighting suddenly appearing enemies for over 20 days? I think it is incredible they’ve lasted this long.”

The side of the Black Knight’s helmet had five golden lines embossed on it. It was the symbol of the First Black Knight and showed that the middle-aged man was the leader of the Black Knights. Nevertheless, the captain was treating the little girl with great care.

It was natural. The girl’s identity was Magician King Goldhit. She was the continent’s strongest magician, the master of the Tower of Eternity, and one of the five pillars of the empire. The Black Knights might be one of the representatives of the empire, but it was hard to act like that in front of Goldhit.

“Hmm, I’ll take Captain’s words for it. I will send people in for the last time.”

Goldhit had sent nearly 10,000 troops to the evil eyes’ village over the last dozens of days. It was possible with the fountain that was a warp device, which gave a glimpse of the magical knowledge of the demonkin. Still, Goldhit wasn’t all-powerful and was tired from using a great amount of magic power.

After a moment, 50 knights stood in front of Goldhit.

“You called...”

They were the Blue Flame Knights of the Gauss Kingdom. The swords of the Blue Flame Knights contained a blue flame, and their skills were good enough to compare to the Black Knights of the empire. Of course, the Blue Flame Knights had been pushed aside in terms of scale for the Black Knights, who had an enormous amount of resources poured into them and expanded to 1,000 people.

Goldhit spoke to the leader of the Blue Flame Knights, “Stand at the fountain. I will send you to the evil eyes’ village and sweep away the remnants of the Overgeared members.”

“...” The Blue Flame Knights leader gritted his teeth. The Overgeared Kingdom was the greatest enemy of the Gauss Kingdom. The Gauss Kingdom had been fighting with Grid since the days of the Eternal Kingdom and recognized the Overgeared Kingdom as a public enemy.

The knights leader had lost many troops to the Overgeared Kingdom and wanted to get revenge, but not like this. He was a knight of the Gauss Kingdom, not a knight of the empire. Why did he need to be commanded by the empire?

“Well... do you have anything to say?” Goldhit frowned as the leader of the Blue Flame Knights didn’t answer. Killing intent rose, and the Blue Flame Knights found it hard to breathe. “...”

Goldhit and the Black Knight were stepping on them. This was their territory after all...

The leader of the Blue Flame Knights stared at Goldhit's small feet for a while before dropping his head. "...No. I'll punish the enemy."

They couldn't resist the empire. They had to fight. The empire had paid 200 golden crowns in exchange for the right to use the Blue Flame Knights. The reason for obeying orders was clear.

'Yes, we're fighting for our country, not the empire.'

The leader of the Blue Flame Knights made a decision, and the grinning Goldhit sent them away with magic.

"They're going to die."

The Overgeared nobles and soldiers were staying in the evil eyes' village. Soon, they would be crushed and collapse. It wouldn't be long before the evil eyes' king was

defeated and the massive knowledge of the evil eyes was obtained by the empire.

“Kukukuk...”

This was an opportunity to study the eyes of a living evil eyes! Goldhit was feeling blissful. She thought it was worthwhile to come this far and suffer. It was at this moment that...

“The Overgeared King has arrived,” a Black Knight came to Goldhit’s barracks and reported.

The expression of the Black Knight was dull. He wasn’t too tense at the appearance of the Overgeared King. There was naturally no reason for him to be nervous. The Overgeared King wasn’t an enemy at present. Even if he tried something, there were two Black Knights and the magician king on this side.

“Hrmm...” Goldhit rose from her seat and headed to the entrance of the village. A black-haired man was standing

there with folded arms. The silver crown on his head showed he was devoted to his status as king. It was a sorry sight.

“It has been a while,” Goldhit moved to the entrance and greeted Grid, who showed an obviously offended expression.

“I guess you are still kidnapping children and raising them like livestock.”

“What is the difference between livestock and a young child?”

“...?”

“Both are powerless. They are raised to be eaten.”

Goldhit glanced toward the ground, looking underground where the Overgeared Kingdom was struggling. She was saying that they were also pigs.

“Don’t waste time and go back. As a king, how can your

ass get up from the throne so often?”

In fact, Goldhit had a lot of interest in Grid. She was interested in existing legends. It was a feeling that was close to liking but not anymore. Goldhit’s grudge against Grid was huge after he took the thunder stone.

‘...Hrmm?’ Goldhit, who had been turning around after ridiculing Grid, suddenly stopped. She sensed the magic power filling the sky. Looking up, Goldhit became nervous as she detected the thunderstorm.

“Aren’t there still close to three months left in the truce agreement between the empire and the Overgeared Kingdom? Overgeared King. It is impossible for you to attack us. You know better than anyone that you can’t resist causality. It isn’t worth it.”

Grid was a player and instantly understood the ‘causality’ that Goldhit spoke about. She was probably referring to the ‘system’. Still, Grid knew how to take advantage of the system.

“Is this called the struggle of the livestock?”

Rain poured down.

“Storm Demonic Energy Field.”

Thunder struck. It was a mighty force that didn’t distinguish between enemies as it swept through the soldiers blocking the entrance.

“...Crazy!!” Goldhit shouted as she protected herself from thunder with 10 layers of shields. This was the wrath of the magician king! It was a sight that couldn’t be easily seen and was the precursor to a disaster. The number of people who had seen Goldhit’s current state was small enough to be counted on one hand.

One of those people was Grid. Grid raised the fighting energy of the Hero King and stared at Goldhit with fierce eyes. “You aren’t entitled to stand in my way.”

“...!”

‘Oh, my god. There is somebody who doesn’t fear the magician king?’

The expressions of the Black Knights stiffened. They didn’t expect the Overgeared King to act like this, and the pressure he was giving off was stronger than they had imagined it would be.

Chapter 977

‘This guy must be crazy!’

The biggest disadvantage of large-scale attack magic was that it couldn’t distinguish between targets. Of course, some spells were an exception but it was like that nine out of ten times. The Overgeared King’s summoning of lightning within a 200-meter-radius was a blatant declaration of war. In fact, his magic was damaging the bodies of the imperial soldiers.

The lightning magic was somehow familiar. It evoked a strange sense of déjà vu as it generated magnetic force and caused her orb to shake. The sound of thunder in her ears confused her mind and disrupted the spell casting. Just before the lightning fell toward her head, Goldhit opened a shield that protected herself, only to feel confused.

‘It’s weak?’

Grid's magic clearly contained something strange. It generated a magnetism that slowed down the pace of spell casting, so it definitely transcended the category of usual spells. However, the attack power was too weak. There was no need to stack 10 layers of shields. Two layers seemed to be enough. Goldhit was confused since she had long known that Grid possessed Braham's soul.

‘Hasn't he fully awakened the enhanced magic? No, he might be afraid of the empire and could be deliberately saving his strength. Once the soldiers died, he would cross a river he couldn't return from.

She needed to test it a bit more.

“Overgeared King! You violated the agreement first!”

Her opponent was a legend and a king. Goldhit shouldn't be condescending just because he was 100% an insidious person. In order to peek at a certain level of his strength, it was necessary to push him to the edge of a cliff. As she judged this, she started chanting a spell that caused the

earth to shake. Goldhit thought that the big earthquake would hit the Overgeared soldiers and drop them into a pit.

‘What?’

Grid scoffed, and Goldhit’s spell was neutralized. It was proof of a higher-level knowledge. Grid’s magic knowledge delved into Goldhit’s knowledge and denied it.

Goldhit freaked out. ‘T-This is unbelievable! This ability!’

The words of her teacher came to mind, “My master was omnipotent because of his magic. He easily grasped the magic process of others and cut off the activation of the spell itself. Every magician, except for Mumud, was helpless in front of Master. Thus, everyone was afraid of the Duke of Wisdom.”

Duke of Wisdom...

Great knowledge was what blocked the magic from its

source! It was an unrealistic force that exerted a power of 100 with one magic power. Goldhit hadn't believed it because it sounded like a story from the Age of Mythology. She laughed because it was too exaggerated.

However, Grid proved it at this moment. He was the omnipotent Duke of Wisdom that he had inherited from Braham!

'This power was real...!' Goldhit was shocked as the opponent's power surpassed her expectations. Lightning struck the crown of her head in this gap. This was lightning that inflicted 10,000 damage. It was an attribute that made magic resistance meaningless, but the strength itself was lousy. Still, even a small stake could break a rock if it kept hitting the same point.

Goldhit was struck 12 times on the head and got a headache. The lightning that fell irregularly in a 200-meter-radius persistently hit Goldhit like it had an ego.

'He has full control over this large-scale magic!'

The reason why large-scale magic couldn't distinguish between targets was that it was hard to control. Grid was in full control of a large spell with a range of 200 meters!

‘This is the strength of the Duke of Wisdom...!’

The storm started to wane. No more lightning fell, but Goldhit's body still shook from the electric shocks.

“Your talent is great. You are a genius that will emerge once in 100 years. You will surely be the greatest magician in the world.” Her master's praise scattered like dust.

“All magicians in the world have honored you as the magician king.”

“Of course. I am the supreme existence of magicians.”

She felt ashamed of herself for using the word ‘supreme.’ Her body was hot. The strange feelings overtook Goldhit. “Eek...!”

Why did she have to feel such petty emotions? Goldhit glared at Grid...

“ ... ”

...She gave up She was afraid. She wasn't confident enough to bear the insults that would be in the Overgeared King's eyes.

‘It is better to back off here.’

The fact, ‘Goldhit can't beat Grid’, was added to the truth of the world. Goldhit stiffened like a rat in front of a snake and was covered in sweat. In order to gain the enhanced magic, she decided to revise her approach and attitude toward Grid for the future. There was plenty of hope. Since the first time they met, she had laid the foundation by expressing her favorability toward him.

“E-Enter.” Goldhit immediately opened the path.

Grid's gaze was still watching the ground.

“ ... ”

The Overgeared members, who were isolated in the evil eyes' village, had concealed their situation thoroughly. They had been worried that Grid would lose concentration while working because of their misfortune. Of course, they were in control at first.

For more than 20 days, Grid never noticed the situation in the evil eyes' village. However, within a few days of the arrival of Reidan's reinforcements, the situation of the evil eyes' village was delivered to Grid. Grid also had eyes and ears. The moment the army of Reidan moved, a report came from Piaro. Piaro had recognized what was going on in the evil eyes' village, then Grid received further news from Mercedes.

However, it hadn't shaken Grid. Instead, he had been immersed in his blacksmithing work. This was the job he had to do right now, and it was the wish of his

colleagues. He also believed in his colleagues. That's right. Grid hadn't doubted the skills of the 10 meritorious retainers and the Overgeared members.

Then he arrived at Lepio Village and realized the situation was serious, unlike what he had thought. The troops sent from Reidan 10 days ago were still unable to enter the village. Grid was furious. He lost his temper the moment he saw Goldhit's disgusting face. His killing intent was strong enough to cut her neck right away.

However, the system recognized Goldhit as an 'allied force', so Grid was only able to use Storm Demonic Energy Field. Perhaps it was due to his high luck stat, but he was able to vent some of his anger.

[The target has received 10,000 damage.]

[The target has received 10,000...]

[The target has received 10,000...]

[Your have discovered the effect of the target's spell with

the effect of Duke of Wisdom! The target's spell has been destroyed!]

The random lightning started to strike Goldhit. The power of Duke of Wisdom sealed Goldhit's magic.

Perhaps there was a problem with the 'body' Goldhit was currently in and she was forced to step back.

“E-Enter.”

“...Tsk.”

Grid didn't want to see her again, but he couldn't waste time. The imperial soldiers who had been struck by the lightning were relatively healthy thanks to their heavy armor and expensive items. Grid moved through the nervous people and glanced at his allies. “Let's go.”

“Yes!” The Overgeared soldiers responded and followed Grid. The imperial troops didn't block their way, and they entered the village without a hitch. The knights and soldiers couldn't act when Commander Goldhit had

opened the way.

“Is it okay?” The Black Knight asked.

Hearing the Black Knight’s concern, Goldhit nodded.

“The grandmaster will stop him.”

He was watching the situation here. Soon, he would come with the White Dragon’s Eyes.

The evil eyes’ king was destined to die even with Grid’s presence.

“Charge!”

“This is our land! Don’t forgive the demonkin who have been parasites under our land and the Overgeared Kingdom that protects them! This is our cause!”

The Blue Flame Knights were transferred to the evil eyes’ village. Like the previous invaders, they appeared

suddenly out of thin air. They honestly wanted to discipline and expel the demonkin as well as the Overgeared Kingdom, the main enemy of their kingdom.

This place was their territory. It was a place where enemies couldn't run wild.

A blue flame emerged from the tips of the swords wielded by the knights. The bare bodies of the Overgeared soldiers, whose armor were broken, were easily cut down. However, the Overgeared soldiers didn't lose their morale. Those who were cut in the chest coughed up blood and kept fighting, while those who were cut in one of their shoulders switched their weapon to the other hand, and those who had their legs cut crawled to advance. The Blue Flame Knights got a chill at this eerie sight.

“These guys... Keok!”

The knights, who were about to swing their swords again at the Overgeared soldiers who clung to them like

zombies, suddenly fell from the arrow that flew silently. It was a signal that the ranks had collapsed. The arrows that assimilated with the darkness kept flying without stopping. The leading troops of the Blue Flame Knights collapsed, and the Overgeared soldiers climbed onto their chests and shoved their swords like beasts.

“Were they trained by Jude?” Someone clicked their tongues at the appearance of the Overgeared soldiers. It was Jishuka who was shooting arrows from behind the soldiers. Her blazing red hair and silky tanned skin made her look beautiful in the darkness as she fired the arrows.

“Sigh. If you don’t run away, I can’t back down.”

Now she had only 13 arrows remaining. She planned to use her few remaining arrows for self-defense until the reinforcements arrived. However, the Overgeared soldiers didn’t flee and fought to the end. Thus, she couldn’t run away alone.

“...We must go back together.”

She took a breath and pulled back the bowstring. The arrow that disappeared from the world struck the enemy's heart and revealed its appearance. At the same time...

[Critical!]

[The weak spot has been successfully attacked!]

[The number of enemies you've killed by shooting the weak spot has reached 10 million!]

[It is a great achievement that will go down in history!]

[The Advanced Bow Mastery skill has been upgraded to Sure Death Bow Mastery!]

“Eh?” Jishuka faced a new evolution.

‘I’ve killed only 10 million?’

It was fortunate other people couldn't know what she was thinking. Then an amazing situation occurred.

[A holy voice has entered your ears.]

-You...World tree...Aura...

[★ Hidden Class Change Quest ★ Povia's Descendant has occurred!]

“...!”

Povia—it was the name of the former legendary archer. She was an elf and was known to be the best archer in the world. Becoming her descendant meant being a legend...

Jishuka achieved the conditions to get a legendary class without even knowing it! By the way...

[Would you like to accept the quest?]

“What if I don't want to?”

-...

[Do you really want to reject the quest?]

“Yes.”

[The quest was rejected.]

Jishuka made a surprising choice. No, it was a natural choice. She had been called a godly archer for a long time.

“I’m going to surpass Povia, so it is funny to be her descendant.” Jishuka easily passed up the situation with a single smile. An ordinary person would never understand this attitude. It was a confidence that she could have because she was a genius. Then her unexpected choice caused a new development.

[The qualification for the hidden class ‘Bow Sage’ has been obtained. A class change quest will occur.]

“Hehe.”

As expected, warriors should fight. The over a month’s worth of struggling was a stepping stone for her to grow.

Jishuka grinned and contemplated the battlefield with Hawk Eyes. Members of the Overgeared Guild were fighting all over the place and all of them were breaking their limits due to the extreme circumstances.

“I’ll be able to pay a proper price in the future.”

The Overgeared Guild was no longer a Grid one-man team. An arrow formed from magic power struck the throat of a Blue Flame Knight. The knights were astonished at the god who shot a bow without any arrows.

Chapter 978

“What is your relationship with her?” Sticks asked. His gaze was focused on Magician King Goldhit.

“Relationship? What relationship? Isn’t it a relationship where we want to kill each other?” Grid answered hurriedly.

Sticks laughed. “Then why is she looking at you like that?”

“Like what? Isn’t she in a bad state?”

“The magician king’s magic power recovery rate is faster than that of the elves who have the power of the world tree. She can easily adjust her condition. In fact, she was recovering in real time while confronting Your Majesty.”

“There is no limit to her flesh...? Mercedes said that the magician king’s body is generally less durable.”

“Nope. She looks fine.”

“Um... Sticks, are you feeling wary?”

“Hahaha... The magician king’s ability is above mine. I’m a knowledge seeker, not a magician.”

“Aren’t you good at magic? You can even use elemental magic.”

“It is a basic skill I mastered in the process of exploring knowledge. It isn’t a level to brag about in front of the continent’s greatest magician.”

‘...Don’t tell me, is it luck again?’

Goldhit had failed to cast the spell because the effect of Duke of Wisdom had activated ‘luckily’. This caused her to overvalue his skills and lose her will. It was a misunderstanding that could be seen in third-tier manhwa and novels these days, but the possibility couldn’t be ruled out. Grid had experienced this absurd

development many times over the past few years. Even now, he was experiencing a lot of luck.

‘It feels good.’

This was the great power of luck! He felt that he had finally overcome his bad luck!

‘Decades ago, this development was a first-rate literary development!’

Of course, it was an unfounded claim. In any case, he felt like the protagonist of a first-rate novel!

Grid was filled with joy as he arrived in front of the fountain. The statue of a naked boy with a comical expression was decorating the fountain, and water was pouring from his little place. When Grid first visited this place, the evil eyes had manipulated certain parts of the statue to open the entrance to the village.

“However, I can’t remember a single maneuver. I’ll ask Lauel...”

“Entrust it to me.”

Sticks was used to having a deep conversation with the Destiny Guardians. He had a peculiar passion for learning. As such, he had learned a lot about the evil eyes species and how to enter their village. Sage Sticks manipulated the statue several times, and the space tore open, revealing a portal. It was a portal connected to the evil eyes village.

“It has lost a lot of life.”

“Life?”

What was wrong with whose life? Grid was reminded of the fact that Sticks was suffering from a curse. “Sticks, are you going to die now?”

“...” Sticks closed his mouth and stared at Grid. As a high elf, he had lived a long life and wanted to live longer. He was sensitive to death because he felt like he was going to

die every time his heart hurt. Still, he couldn't help feeling irritated when Grid mentioned it. "Don't think I'm going to die yet. I'm talking about the life span of the portal."

"A portal has a life expectancy?"

"It is the same with objects. A device made of magic power can't exist forever. Furthermore, this portal has a shorter life span due to the shock it received from outside."

"What shock?"

"Goldhit seems to have placed an unusual spell on this portal. The portal's operation was changed so much that it was damaged and the life span greatly reduced. It will be destroyed by next year..."

"What happens when it is destroyed?"

"The passage connecting the evil eyes village to the ground will disappear, and the evil eyes will be isolated."

“Can you recreate it?”

“It will probably be hard. A semi-permanent portal can only be made by the giants, but the whereabouts of the giants are unknown...”

“...Hmm, okay. In any case, the evil eyes have to leave this place.”

It was a natural thing. Now that the evil eyes village was revealed to the public, the evil eyes had to move homes for their safety.

“Do you intend to move the evil eyes to the Overgeared Kingdom?”

“Of course.”

“I will help actively. I am interested in the knowledge of the evil eyes people that is sleeping in the library. Then let's go.”

Grid, Sticks, the former Giant Guild members, and 2,000 soldiers moved through the portal. They panicked the moment they arrived at the village entrance. The situation in the city was completely different from what Grid's group had expected.

“...”

The village entrance was blocked by the Overgeared soldiers, and they were a wreck. It was hard to find any armor, and their bodies were covered with wounds. Grid got a glimpse of how bitter the fighting had been over the last month. It seemed like hell. They must be tired. Then what was this? The Overgeared soldiers were as tempered as a strong sword. They gazed at the enemies with unshakable eyes.

On the other hand, the gazes of the opponents facing them were completely dead. The enemy soldiers were wearing luxurious armor and still had physical strength left, but they shrank back like dogs who had lost the fight.

“...?”

What was this situation? Grid's group turned their gazes to what was going on inside the city. Behind the Overgeared soldiers gazing at the enemy, there was a scene of blood and flesh scattering. A beautiful black-haired woman stabbed her sword into a knight's stomach and pointed her gun at his head.

“S-Spare me...” The knight coughed up blood and pleaded, but it was useless. The beautiful black-haired woman mercilessly pulled the trigger, and the knight's head burst like a watermelon.

“Waaahhhhhhhh!” The Overgeared soldiers roared like beasts and stomped their feet. The soldiers were already in a state of despair and stepped back with surprise.

“Oh, you came?” The black-haired beauty neatly handled the remaining enemies and smiled after finding Grid. Her smile was so brilliant it was hard to believe she had slaughtered four knights.

“Y-Y-Yura, you went through a lot of trouble.”

Was it the application of the Hell Leap skill? Yura’s sword disappeared through a passage in the air and appeared again in a completely different direction, causing Grid to be stunned beyond being in awe of her. He thought he wouldn’t be able to respond to her attacks.

‘Incredibly strong...’

What if? If he really married Yura, wouldn’t he receive a one-sided beating whenever they fought? He was afraid since combat senses could be demonstrated in reality.

The empire divided the evil eyes village into 16 points—the east and west entrances, the central library, the eight roads leading from the entrances to the library, the castle of the evil eyes king, and the four roads leading from the library to the castle. Most of the outside forces that the empire sent to the village came from these 16 points.

The same was true for the Blue Flame Knights. The main members of the Blue Flame Knights appeared in front of the library and in particular the castle gates.

“...The raid is short-term.”

It was the Peak Sword and Vantner duo. They stretched and slowly opened their eyes before standing up. 30 knights could be seen. They wore full plate armor and yellow cloaks and held silver long swords with a cross handle. Just by looking at their armed state, one could tell they were unusual. It was obvious with one glance that expensive goods covered their bodies. They seemed to be knights of a senior noble or a royal family.

“Don’t they look exceptionally strong?”

The enemies that they had been dealing with for the past month were also formidable. However, these knights were extremely unusual. Peak Sword and Vantner felt troubled. They noticed that their biggest crisis had come.

“We have to be tense. They will reach their goal if we’re careless.” Vantner raised his shield and stared at the rear of the knights. There was a young knight who didn’t wear a helmet in order to show off his good-looking face and the abundant hair he was proud of. He was called Apollo, and his name shone in silver. It meant he was a quasi-named NPC.

“He is at least level 400.”

That was at least 20 levels higher than Peak Sword’s. Additionally, quasi-named NPCs had higher stats than players. It seemed hard to beat Apollo even if Peek and Vantner worked together. Moreover, Apollo had many subordinates. They were estimated to be at least level 330.

“You guys, enter the castle right now. There are evil eyes in the castle, so listen to their orders,” Peak Sword ordered.

However, the soldiers refused. “We can’t leave the

marquis!”

“We will stay and buy some time, so the marquis and earl should retreat!”

The soldiers put up a loyal appearance! They sincerely respected Peak Sword and Vantner and were determined to sacrifice their lives for the two people. Yet Peak Sword frowned instead of feeling impressed. “Get out of here quickly. That guy can’t run wild with you here.”

“...?”

This guy...? Run wild...? Who did he mean?

Then it happened as the soldiers were tilting their heads to the side. The sword hanging from Peak Sword’s waist started to shake wildly. Iyarugt in the sheath was snapping at Peak Sword, -You are a young fool. Why aren’t you quickly summoning me? Shit, I will fall behind by following you.

“ ... ”

Thanks to Peak Sword using him for the past three years and two months, Iyarugt's soul had strengthened, and he could now speak without needing to be summoned.

However, his tone was very harsh. He talked like a back-alley gangster. Was this the reality of hell's best swordsman?

Some people might be shocked and disappointed, but in fact, this wasn't Iyarugt's nature. Iyarugt just adapted to the change in environment. He was like this because of Peak Sword, who was sensitive to comments in articles, and Vantner, who was sensitive about his bald head. Iyarugt's tone had changed after being stuck with them for a month, becoming tough.

‘...I'm glad Huroi isn't here.’

If Huroi were here... It was horrible just imagining it. Iyarugt might've fallen to the point of mentioning people's parents.

Peak Sword twitched and pulled Iyarugt out of the sheath.

It was a clear red sword.

-Peak Sword, as you know, this sword is just a medium that seals my soul. I don't know what will happen to my soul the moment the sword breaks. I might be released or lose my body. Thus, be careful not to act stupidly. Iyarugt's tone was fierce, but his soul felt worried.

Peak Sword smiled and nodded. "Yes, I'll be careful. I will never let you break."

On the other hand, the Blue Flame Knights were stunned. In particular, Apollo revealed a blatant feeling of greed.

"It is a beautiful sword. It is a work of art that isn't fitting for a man like you. I will have it."

"Pfft."

The magic sword was a work of art...? Was there a hole in his eyes?

“Why are you laughing?” Apollo glared at Peak Sword with a terrifying killing intent that would crush a person. However, Peak Sword was fine. Apollo wasn’t terrible from the standpoint of Peak Sword, who had defeated the Hero in the National Competition.

“Who wouldn’t laugh at a dog? Do I have to explain why I am laughing? Dog-like bastard. You don’t know the value of this sword yet you dare covet it. Sit down.”

“...You will die soon.”

“You’re the one who is going to die. Come! Iyarugt!”

Iyarugt started to emit a bloody light. Apollo and the Blue Flame Knights were shocked by the unusual aura and pulled out their swords, while Vantner paled and retreated with the soldiers. The mist solidified into a bead, and the shape of a man eventually emerged. He

was Hell's best swordsman, a Sword Demon, Great Demon Zepar's only rival, and so on. It didn't take long for Iyarugt to show up in the world with his tough words.

“Fucking brat, summon me quicker next time.”

An elderly man bent over with bloody flames wrapped around his body. A horn rose from his forehead, proving he was a demonkin as he flew forward with his sword.

“...!?” Apollo's eyes shook while the other knights didn't respond. The sword drew a full moon.

“...?” The bodies of the knights who discovered it belatedly were split in two, and blood streamed like a fountain.

“There are some decent guys mixed in.” Iyarugt licked the blood from the sword, and his gaze focused on Apollo.

“Sublime Sword.”

Iyarugt had achieved ‘breaking through his limits’ a total

of five times with Peak Sword. He had regained almost half his power. It could only be sustained for a very short time since it was formed by the soul, but it was sufficient to clean up these small fry.

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Chapter 979

Just like how some pets such as elementals didn't have the concept of growth, Iyarugt didn't have the growth concept of 'level.' This didn't mean he was restricted or had limitations though. Rather, it meant that Iyarugt could grow through the process of restoring himself.

[* By winning in a battle against the strong, he can regain a feeling of life. The more he wins, the more he will regain your skills. (5/10)]

This was stated in Iyarugt's status window. Every time he raided a named boss monster, he could break his limits and restore his strength. The power of Iyarugt's current Sublime Sword was four times more powerful than Peak Sword's Annihilate and was comparable to Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle.

“Kuek...!” Apollo blocked the sword with a shield and couldn't help groaning from the shock. His left arm that was holding the shield spun through the air.

“Captain!” The knights’ horrified cries rang out. A demonkin had suddenly appeared, and one of the knights’ captain’s arms was cut off. Apollo used the first aid skill Hit a Pressure Point available for a fourth advancement knight and asked in a resentful voice, “I don’t understand... The evil eyes are a species banished from hell. Why are you helping the demonkin?”

However, Iyarugt wasn’t a conversationalist. He was only interested in pursuing fighting skills. Iyraugt had no interest in other people’s positions, nor was he kind enough to explain his reasons.

“What a load of shit.”

“...”

The moment the atmosphere became tense from Iyarugt’s attitude, a voice rang out.

“Shouldn’t you look at your own actions before blaming

others?” It was Peak Sword who shouted from behind Iyarugt. “You are the invaders! Do you deserve to blame other people when you have invaded this territory, harmed the people and took away their peace? You are barbarians!”

“...I omitted the introductions, so there was a misunderstanding. We are the Blue Flame Knights of the Gauss royal family. This is our territory, and we have the right and duty to defend ourselves. It is the evil eyes who are the invaders, not us.”

“G-Gauss Kingdom? Keuk! Still, the evil eyes haven’t hurt your people!”

“How do you know? Can you guarantee that they haven’t harmed anyone? They are demonkin. They must be ferocious to have been banished from hell.”

“Uh...!”

“No... Before discussing race, it is a matter of basic

national security... Think about it from our perspective. If you find out that a certain armed group is living underneath your Overgeared Kingdom... would you be able to overlook it?”

“...!” Peak Sword became more and more dumbfounded. It was because he couldn’t refute any of Apollo’s reasonable words. As an easy example, imagine if the Chinese army were living underneath South Korean territory. It was something that could never be tolerated for Koreans.

“I-I see... I fully understand your position. Technically, you guys are the victims...” Peak Sword admitted it honestly. However—

“Ah, I don’t know! In any case, the Gauss Kingdom is our enemy! I’ll get rid of everyone here!”

It was enough to ignore the unfavorable truth. Peak Sword refused any further conversation. He pulled out a dark sword—a long sword that Grid had made out of

Belial's Horn. Just based on the performance alone, it was a weapon that was slightly more powerful than Iyarugt.

“Let's go, Iyarugt! Exterminate them!”

The new Iyarugt was launched like a flash of light while Peak Sword stood in place and bent over.

“Hell Moon Cut.”

Simultaneously, Iyarugt had cut through the lead knights and was surrounded by the enemies.

“Annihilate.”

Peak Sword's weapon swept through the enemies around Iyarugt. It was a ridiculously aggressive offensive. Apollo realized the opponents weren't willing to talk and raised a blue sword energy from the tip of his sword. It was a flame-like sword.

“My fire will protect my country!”

It was a powerful wave of energy! Peak Sword was pushed back during the gap created by using Draw Sword, and Vantner ran to his side to set up a shield. After that, Apollo's sword energy struck Vantner's shield. Vantner murmured to himself, 'It is a whole different level...!'

As expected, a fourth advancement opponent was too much at this point in time.

A third advancement class could overwhelm a second advancement class. Then what about a fourth advancement?

It was difficult to deal with Apollo's damage, despite his stats falling significantly because of his severed arm.

While suffering an internal injury and coughing up blood, Peak Sword shouted, "Hey! Iyarugt! Get rid of that guy quickly!"

"You aren't my master so you should shut up."

The ferocious Iyarugt moved close to Apollo. He also knew that Peak Sword would be in danger if he didn't get rid of Apollo.

The swordsmanship of a demonkin was different from that of human swordsmen.

The dazzling sword strikes that depended on the innate power and vitality of a demonkin suppressed Apollo fiercely.

Apollo was aware that Iyarugt exposed one or two gaps, but he didn't take advantage of them.

They were a trap.

Apollo had a hunch that he could suffer more damage if he was lured in by these gaps. It would've been easy to fight back and defend if only he hadn't lost his arm. The biggest problem was that he failed to gauge the power of the first attack.

“Good! Well done!”

“Push him, Iyarugt!”

Peak Sword and Vantner didn't bother getting involved in the fight. It was because they weren't in a perfect state and would just be a hindrance. Now there were less than 10 Blue Flame Knights left, and they vented their anger with an energetic shout. “These guys!”

While they were fighting for their lives, these two people were hiding behind the crazy demonkin and cheering.

“We'll deal with you!” The blue flaming sword energy of the knights rose in unison. They had trained together for many years, and their cooperation was close to art.

“Aack!” Peak Sword screamed as two swords pierced his left side while he was busy blocking. Another two attacked from the right, and Peak Sword would be in danger of being killed if he didn't handle it right. Peak Sword forgot about his pride and rolled his body. He

thought about Grid as he barely managed to avoid the crisis.

It was hard to deal with four players at once. Then what about Grid who won against 400 players? It was really amazing. He was a truly great guy.

‘Cool! Too good!’ Peak Sword could only be described as crazy as he praised Grid while on the verge of dying, “God Grid is the beeeest!”

‘He is sick again.’ Vantner clicked his tongue while hiding behind a sword. His shield’s durability was low and was on the verge of being destroyed. “...!?”

‘They are royal knights!’

The Blue Flame Knights were truly powerhouses. Their level of swordsmanship was so high that it was difficult to find a gap of opportunity, and their attack power was also high. Eventually, the four blue flaming swords shattered Vantner’s tattered shield.

“Eek! Hey! I’m dead!” Vantner cried out as he was stabbed in the stomach, but Peak Sword couldn’t afford to help him. Peak Sword was in the exact same situation was Vantner. He had already been stabbed in the stomach several times.

“Oh, shit! You are a tanker and should be protecting me! You should go before me!”

“ ... ”

The two of them were part of the 10 meritorious retainers of the Overgeared Kingdom. The Overgeared soldiers watched the legends of the Overgeared Kingdom struggle. They had been expecting a fierce and wonderful fight, but the situation was a mess.

“We will fight!”

“Yes! Go!”

The soldiers, who had been staring blankly for a while,

raised their weapons. They hadn't participated because Vantner had been urging them to stay away, but now they had hit a limit. The soldiers were prepared to die. They decided to sacrifice their lives to save Peak Sword and Vantner.

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

“Ugh... Run away...”

Peak Sword and Vantner didn't welcome the soldiers joining the fight. They might lose experience and items if they died, but they could resurrect again. On the other hand, the soldiers only had one life. Piaro, Asmophel, Jude, and the elite soldiers they worked hard to train... The two people didn't want the soldiers' to die after they had fought together for more than a month.

Peak Sword escaped the immediate crisis due to the soldiers joining and shouted while coughing up blood, “Shit...! Iyarugt! Protect the soldiers!”

Unfortunately, Iyarugt wasn't in a position to respond to his call. Apollo was also a strong representative of his country. He was furious, and Iyarugt couldn't shake him off easily. Vantner pushed the knights with his shoulders and saved his allies. Then he glared at the tightly closed gates.

“Shit! Those evil eyes to the end...!”

If there was such turmoil, they should open the gates and help. However, the evil eyes didn't do anything.

‘These nasty bastards, who are we fighting for?’

The people they were sacrificing their lives for were ignoring them. Thus, Peak Sword and Vantner felt that all their efforts were in vain. It was called sage time in jargon. Their frustration was decreasing their morale. At this moment, a flower bloomed in the middle of the battlefield. The red flower was blooming from the heart of a Blue Flame Knight.

“...?”

Was it a hallucination? The knight was bewildered as he discovered the red flower at his heart. Blood started pouring from his nose.

“...!” He couldn’t even scream as his body fell. The flower that blossomed at his heart was already dying as it scattered petals everywhere. The scattered petals became blood and soaked the ground. That’s right. The red flower that had fallen from the heart of the collapsed knight wasn’t a flower but blood pouring from the heart.

“...What?!”

Who killed the knight without a trace? Who showed up and helped? Both the Blue Flame Knights and the Overgeared soldiers were incredibly astonished.

“...Phew, I survived.”

Peak Sword and Vantner smiled with relief. They were

aware of the identity of the person who had entered the battlefield. He was the shadow that protected the Overgeared Kingdom—the Death God Faker. Another Blue Flame Knight lost his life and collapsed.

‘Where the hell is he?’

The knights became tense as two of their colleagues died. They focused and desperately looked around. Nevertheless, it was useless. Faker invoked Lantier’s technique and was in an extremely secretive and mobile state.

Duguen.Duguen.Duguen...

It was a battlefield where only the heartbeats of the frightened knights were heard. There was complete silence. All the Blue Flame Knights died without knowing who killed them.

“...In any case, his form looks good.”

“He looks too cool in some ways. I’m going to spew.”

Peak and Vantner sat down and turned their gazes towards Iyarugt.

Iyarugt and Apollo were moving all over the battlefield. They had already moved away from the gate and crossed the city as they exchanged blows. Then a black sword fell between them. It was Faker. Apollo, who was maintaining a breathtaking balance, completely missed the opportunity to reverse the situation thanks to the sudden increase in enemies.

The result was a great victory. The guards, including Peak Sword and Vantner, were able to defeat the Blue Flame Knights with less damage than expected.

After a while, Grid arrived at the scene. He was relieved when he saw Peak Sword and Vantner, as well as the troops they led.

“You must be dying from the hard work. Leave the rest to us and go rest.”

“Yes, rest. Everyone has gone through a lot of trouble.”

“Hehe... Log out.”

“Wahhhh! King Grid!”

The soldiers cheered. Grid who led the large army was their savior.

“I won’t forget your hard work.”

The appearances of the survivors weren’t great. Grid knew how hard they had been struggling and remembered their faces. He would give them big rewards in the future.

“Your Majesty.” Then Sticks approached Grid with a bad expression. “A mighty magic power can be felt from the castle.”

“From the castle?”

Grid turned his gaze toward the gates. The gates were

firmly closed. There were no signs of outsiders having broken in.

“Are you referring to the magic power of the evil eyes’ king?”

“Of course, I can also feel the magic power of the evil eyes’ king. However, this is as powerful as the evil eyes’ king... No, it is several times more powerful than the other magic power.”

Sage Sticks—the person who stayed calm when encountering Magician King Goldhit now had a shaky voice. “It is clear that someone has breached the castle.”

That someone was naturally...

“It is someone more powerful than the evil eyes’ king.”

“...Don’t tell me!” Grid immediately opened the gates and ran into the castle. Then he saw it. There were blood stains in the corridor leading to the king’s great hall. This was the place where the evil eyes ministers resided. It

wasn't difficult to infer as to the owner of the blood marks.

“Shit!”

The evil eyes' king was in danger! Grid was filled with nervousness as he ran. He entered the great hall of the evil eyes' king and received a message.

[You have encountered a strong person who has transcended the times.]

The young man holding the evil eyes' king caught Grid's attention. He was a slender beauty who looked tired.

“You are the one who advances your destiny.”

His identity was Zikfrector. He was famous as the grandmaster instead of his real name.

“Hmm, for the sake of convenience, I will kill you, Overgeared King.”

[An unknown survival instinct has been activated! Your fighting energy is charged to the maximum!]

“Let go of that hand!” Grid combined the Blade Aiming at the Gods and the Enlightenment Sword before using 100,000 Army Massacre Sword. Several dozen red energy blades struck the grandmaster. However, the grandmaster used the evil eyes’ king in his hand as a shield and was perfectly fine.

“The concept of death doesn’t work with you, but this doesn’t mean you won’t receive any damage. You are going to die,” the grandmaster uttered blankly before pulling out a white mirror and untying the band covering both eyes of the evil eyes’ king.

Then it happened at this moment.

“Mass Teleport!”

Grid instantly moved to the side of the evil eyes’ king thanks to Stick’s spell and placed the glasses on the king.

They were an easily transferable accessory—the Ether Glasses made by Elizabeth.

“...?”The fatigue on the grandmaster’s face deepened.

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Chapter 980

“ ... ”

The ministers had died. The place where they barely built their lives had collapsed.

All the people who suffered because of their incompetent king, the Overgeared soldiers who struggled to help them, and those who died...

The evil eyes' king clenched his hands into small fists as he sat on his throne. The only thing he could do was destroy. It was impossible for him to protect others. This power was useless because it was too powerful.

“Are you the king of the evil eyes?”

“ ... ”

The intruder asked him a question. As he approached, the smell of blood thickened. The evil eyes' king wanted

to open his eyes and inflict the pain of eternity. He wanted to kill this intruder and soothe the grudge of his people. However, he remained patient. His lips were tightly closed from anger, and blood flowed from where he had bitten his lower lip.

He hadn't forgotten the Overgeared prime minister Lael's words about how the White Dragon's Eyes were dangerous and that he should never open his eyes. The will of those who fought for them, who were forsaken by their homes... He couldn't break these things.

If he did now, he wouldn't be able to face the souls of the Overgeared soldiers who had sacrificed themselves for him. He had to live.

“Not even resisting,” the intruder said in a ridiculing manner. He approached, grabbed the king's collar, and pulled him off the throne. An incompetent person who couldn't protect or get revenge for his people didn't deserve to sit here. At this moment...

“Let go of that hand!” Someone appeared and shouted. The evil eyes’ king remembered the owner of this voice. He recalled the first time he encountered it in his life. It belonged to a man who had exchanged glances with the king and laughed without being exterminated.

‘...Grid.’

He had come to help. Why did Grid want to be entangled with a useless person like the king? Regret preceded gratitude. Grid had chosen the wrong person. This was the moment when the evil eyes’ king was crushed by guilt.

“100,000 Army Massacre Sword!”

A mighty energy flew over the evil eyes’ king. The evil eyes’ king bled from the blow and woke up.

‘H-He is trying to kill me.’

Grid didn’t come to help...? The evil eyes’ king was

shocked by the terrible pain. Then grandmaster released the band around the demon king's eyes. The red and blue eyes of the evil eyes' king appeared in the world. His gaze was facing the White Dragon's Eyes. The evil eyes' king had a gut feeling that...

He would die. The red flames that burned everything would burn his body to ashes, and the chill that froze even the flames would break his soul.

'I'm sorry. The sacrifices of your people have been wasted,' the evil eyes' king apologized as he faced his death. It was an apology for the Overgeared soldiers who had died.

"Wear this!" Then Grid appeared using Mass Teleport and covered the king's eyes with glasses. The magic power that rose from the eyes of the evil eyes' king felt like a lie.

"Ah...!" Behind the sunglasses, the eyes of the evil eyes' king were shaken. He saw a world that wasn't destroyed.

This was the first time the evil eyes' king had seen the ordinary landscapes of life since he was born.

“This... Why is this...?”

He was a person who wasn't allowed to see. As such, the joy that this solitary being, who had been cut off from the world, felt after facing the world for the first time was incredibly huge. The evil eyes' king forgot the terrible reality and gazed at the marble pillars with trembling eyes.

He saw a boy wearing a crown. It was the king of the evil eyes himself.

“Ah... Ahh...” The evil eyes' king touched his face. The boy on the marble confirmed that he was himself. Then he raised his head and looked around. He examined every corner of the world like a dragon who had just hatched.

Grid said, “Let's get out of here. The bigger world is

awaiting you.”

“Grid...”The evil eyes’ king turned toward Grid. Grid was smiling as brightly as the day they first met.

His big hand seemed to be saying, ‘Your loneliness is at an end.’

“I... I can’t do anything.”

The evil eyes’ king was incompetent. Was he worthy of holding Grid’s hand? Consequently, the evil eyes’ king hesitated. Yet Grid grabbed the king’s small hands that were like a child’s.

“Can’t you do many things in the future? Now, let’s go. Everyone is waiting. Your people and my soldiers are hoping that you are safe.”

“They... are alive...”

He was glad, really glad. The evil eyes’ king gave strength to the hand that Grid was holding. Then Grid glanced at

Sticks who nodded because he had already chanted the spell for Mass Teleport.

Flash!

The spell was activated. Grid, Sticks, the evil eyes' king, and the grandmaster—all four people were transferred out of the castle.

“...Eh? Four?”

Why was there four?

“W-Why is he here?” Grid pointed to the grandmaster.

Meanwhile, Sticks looked like he had seen a ghost. “I didn't bring him out. He just rode along with the spell.”

“What? This is possible?”

“It is impossible.”

“Then what is with the current situation?”

“That’s right. Very interesting.”

Grid was bewildered while Sticks was feeling inquisitive. As the two of them were making a fuss, the evil eyes’ king was looking at the crowd gathered at the gate. People could be seen. They were just as beautiful as he had imagined thousands and tens of thousands of times.

“Surround him!”

The Overgeared members and soldiers moved into action. Grid’s group surrounded the uninvited guest and pointed swords and spears at him. The grandmaster stood silently despite being surrounded by thousands of soldiers.

Grid threatened him, “You should go back. Hasn’t the plan already failed?”

The grandmaster nodded. “Certainly. It’s a failure.”

The grandmaster’s aim was the death of the evil eyes’

king. The problem could be solved cleanly by inducing the self-destruction of the evil eyes' king with the White Dragon's Eyes that King Valhalla had handed over. However, it failed when Grid appeared.

“How did you get the Ether Diamonds that a high-ranking demon is guarding? Hmm, it seems I was scammed by Sima Qian.”

Simo Qian of the east—as the subordinate of the Valhalla King, he had given many demands to the empire in exchange for the White Dragon's Eyes and the empire had agreed to most of them. It was because the value of the White Dragon's Eyes was too great.

Now, the value of the White Dragon's Eyes had fallen due to the Ether Glasses. At the very least, it couldn't be used to destroy the evil eyes' king. In other words, the empire had been pushovers.

“It can't be helped. I have to withdraw.” The grandmaster gave up surprisingly easily. He moved back toward

Goldhit and the Black Knight who were waiting for him.

Jishuka came to Grid's side and told him, "Kill him."

She was aware of the dangers of the grandmaster and fully expected that he would one day be their greatest enemy. This was an opportunity. If the grandmaster's offensive power was neutralized due to the truce agreement, shouldn't they use the numerical advantage and pour attacks toward him? The militant Jishuka thought so, but Grid thought differently. "We will just be wiped out."

Goldhit would cast several wide-range spells, and the Overgeared soldiers would be swept away. There was no guarantee that the skill Magic Contemplation of Duke of Wisdom would activate, and there was also a cooldown problem. No, the biggest problem was the strength of the grandmaster.

In the empire, there was Bain who was the emperor's shadow and his most powerful force, Goldhit who

symbolized the ultimate magician and was the master of the Tower of Eternity, Kyle who was the genius that received the favor of the emperor, and finally, the Armored Cavalryman Chensler.

Unlike the above four people, the grandmaster Zikfrector had a low reputation among the Five Pillars. That was natural. He had no heroic achievements. There was nothing on the surface, so his reputation was smaller. However, Grid had a vague grasp of the grandmaster's reality.

‘The empire's strongest!’

Mercedes had mentioned that the other four pillars were afraid of or respected the grandmaster. He was a critical figure that Chairman Lim Cheolho had advised Grid to be careful of. Additionally, the Hero King system classified the grandmaster as a ‘power that transcended the time’, not a ‘powerhouse of the era.’ Grid perceived the threat of the grandmaster to be no less than Garam. At this point, Grid couldn't fight him and win.

‘I must become stronger quickly.’

There were too many mountains to transcend. Still, all these mountains could be surpassed eventually. He was convinced after seeing Kraguel’s huge growth in just one year. The potential of a player was limitless.

‘I have to become stronger,’ Grid once again pledged before turning his gaze to the evil eyes’ king. Thanks to the Ether Glasses, the king could see the faces of the people one by one. He held his beloved wife and son in his arms. It was a sight that warmed the heart... if only the Ether Glasses hadn’t cracked.

“Eh? W-Wait! Hey! Close your eyes! Quickly!”

Feeling frightened, Grid ran to the evil eyes’ king and handed him a helmet. It was a helmet with Ether Glasses.

“I’m now in Reinhardt, the capital of the Overgeared Kingdom!”

There was a boom in the number of blacksmiths flowing into the Overgeared Kingdom. There were more people gathered than usual, and reporters from various broadcasting stations competed for coverage. It was due to an unfamiliar group of demonkin visiting the Overgeared Kingdom—the evil eyes species.

“I heard they are demonkin, but they look cute.”

“Yes, I imagined them as terrible hybrids.”

“I think of them as dolls walking around.”

“By the way, why are they wearing glasses?”

1,000 evil eyes were walking behind the 10 meritorious retainers. The proud chibi-like demonkin captivated the attention of the people. Grid and the evil eyes’ king were at the head of the procession. Before them was the

scenery of a big city drenched in golden sunshine. The evil eyes' king admired the magnificent and beautiful appearance. "It is really wonderful... The sky, the sun, the city... Everything is grander and more beautiful than I ever imagined."

Grid laughed. "Get used to it. How long will you admire the scenery that you will see every day?"

"...It's like a dream."

Then the evil eyes' king stopped walking. Grid was also forced to stop, and the entire procession paused.

Everyone on the streets stared at the evil eyes' king. The reporters around the world focused on the evil eyes' king.

"Thank you. Really... Thank you."

As everyone watched, the evil eyes' king bowed deeply to Grid. The same was true for the rest of the evil eyes' people. A few evil eyes lost their balance when their big heads tilted, but this wasn't seen.

“Our evil eyes will repay your grace for the rest of our lives.” The evil eyes’ king fell to his knees. Grid was at a loss and tried to pull him up, but the king refused Grid’s touch. “I will serve you. Grid, please accept us.”

“...!”

It was a natural step. The evil eyes were a race living in a village. It wasn’t proper to establish an exchange between them and the Overgeared Kingdom. Moreover, since they had lost their home and become dependent on the Overgeared Kingdom, it was predictable for them to come under the Overgeared Kingdom.

However, Grid didn’t expect this declaration to be in a place with so many people watching. After all, the demonkin perceived humans as a subspecies. Since the evil eyes’ pride was as great as the vampires’, their current actions were unconventional.

“You have uprooted our cursed fate. You saved me when I was sitting absentmindedly on my throne in despair

while my soul became as cold as ice. You washed away the red blood that saddened the dark flames white ice castle. Grid, I will be loyal to you. This is my new fate and the ‘way’ that the evil eyes’ people will walk eternally. I will rise from the seat of being an unqualified king and stand at your feet.”

“ ... ”

Something unbelievable had happened. The tens of thousands of people present were silent for a moment. It was so silent that they couldn’t even hear a small breath. Lael covered one side of his face with a hand and muttered, “Ahh, this is a scene where time has stopped.”

In any case, articles were released:

[Grid has become king of the demonkin]

[Once again, Grid has achieved a feat that’s a first for a player!]

[How far will the power of the Overgeared Kingdom

rise?]

[(Column) Let's learn about the evil eyes]

[Pope Damian reveals that he wants to be a companion of the evil eyes...]

(The Walt Disney Company, the world's best maker of animated films, wants to make a movie with the evil eyes as the main characters. Is there a guarantee for the Overgeared King?)

Grid had gotten his hands on a valuable power. Of course, it had only been possible due to the sacrifice and activities of his colleagues. Moreover, it wasn't just the evil eyes that Grid had obtained. An encounter with a small dragon was waiting for Grid.

Chapter 981

[The Overgeared Kingdom has completely absorbed the evil eyes species.]

[The Overgeared Kingdom is the first one to achieve harmony with a demonkin species.]

[The Overgeared Kingdom's national inclination has been changed from 'ordinary' to 'no discrimination and prejudice'.]

[The name of the Overgeared Kingdom has started to be mentioned among the different species hiding all over the continent.]

[Maxong, the king of the water clan, is spreading the great accomplishments of the Overgeared Kingdom.]

[Some species are showing great interest in the Overgeared Kingdom.]

[King Grid of the Overgeared Kingdom has earned 100,000 reputation and title of 'Different Species' King'.]

[Special quests have been generated for players belonging to the Overgeared Kingdom!]

[Process of Understanding Each Other]

[Difficulty: E

Peaceful relations between the people will help maintain security and develop national power. Share your greetings with the evil eyes species, who have become new residents of the Overgeared Kingdom, and raise your affinity.

Quest Clear Conditions: Exchange more than 10 words with the evil eyes species. There are no level requirements.

Quest Failure Conditions: If you make a question mark appear over the head of the evil eyes people during a

conversation, the quest will start again from the beginning.

Quest Clear Reward: Affinity with the evil eyes will rise marginally. Acquisition of Gauss Kingdom area information (adaption to terrain will rise when active in the Gauss Kingdom). The national contribution will rise.]

“Oh?”

The rewards were quite good. National contributions were needed to gain benefits such as the mass-produced Grid set. Meanwhile, terrain adaptation was an additional factor that greatly contributed to combat and movement. Moreover, according to various media reports, the evil eyes were a species classified as advanced among the demonkin. If they could get along with the evil eyes, it would be a great help to understand ‘hell’, a place that was likely to become a stage for future activities. They might be able to obtain related quests luckily.

“Hello? Welcome to the Overgeared Kingdom.”

Players flocked to the place where the evil eyes were located. The Overgeared Kingdom was planning to use the evil eyes as a valuable power, so the evil eyes were staying in territories all over the Overgeared Kingdom.

“Welcome...? Kukukuk, interesting. Reaching out to us who have struggled with solitude in order to curb the beasts in our hearts... Ahh, are you the ‘same kind.’ Is there a monster sleeping in your heart?”

“...?”

Unlike what the players had expected, the quest difficulty was very high. Most players who walked with the evil eyes had their conversation blocked and question marks flooded over the evil eyes’ head. The quest was failed repeatedly.

[Insane Dragon Egg]

[★ Hidden Quest ★]

Like the vampires, the evil eyes were driven out of hell.

The evil eyes are dreaming of working with the child of Nevartan to get revenge on the great demons.

Secure the insane dragon egg guarded by the master of the dungeon and hand it over to the evil eyes.

Quest Clear Conditions: Defeat the master of the dungeon and secure the insane dragon egg.

Quest Clear Reward: Secure 17 evil eyes as subordinates, increase affinity with the evil eyes and start an exchange with the evil eyes.

Quest Failure: Level -3.]

Grid had secured such a quest when he visited the BewareDogs dungeon created by Eat Spicy Jokbal. It

was an unforgettable quest. Along with the visit to the evil eyes village, it was a memorable experience. Yes, that's about it. Grid was very interested in the insane dragon's egg itself.

“What are you going to do with the insane dragon egg?”

“We'll keep it until it hatches.”

“The dragon will grasp the truth of the world the moment it hatches. It will repay its father's enemies by working with the evil eyes.”

“In a thousand years, the child of a dragon will become an adult and hell will be chaotic. Huhuhut...!”

...This was a conversation Grid had with the evil eyes. According to Satisfy's story, there was no plan for the insane dragon child to be active for at least 1,000 years. An adult dragon was more powerful than a great demon. The bond between a dragon and player would break down the balance, and Grid thought there wouldn't be a

chance to get involved with the young insane dragon. By the way...

“My king. The precious destroyer of the future said it would meet you.”

“Destroyer of the future? Who?”

“The only flesh of Nevartan, the insane dragon who fell into darkness due to the evil dragon Bunhelier and the 1st Great Demon Baal. Their name is Nefelina, who will late destroy hell and Bunhelier for honor.”

“...The hatchling?”

“That’s right.”

A transcendent species that even a god couldn’t treat lightly—they were the strongest presences in the world even when the world was destroyed periodically. Grid remembered this. Then now that the evil eyes king mentioned the word ‘dragon’, Grid was very confused by the unexpected situation.

Suddenly, Sticks dropped a book on the floor from where he was organizing the collections from the evil eyes' library. He was shaking fiercely. A dragon was a frightening existence for the person who had been cursed by the gourmet dragon Reiders and suffered from an incurable disease.

Grid didn't welcome this situation. He predicted that the meeting with the hatchling would harm him. The reason for that was simple. It was because the dragon was too strong.

'I am likely to become a pushover.'

There was no framework where a player could borrow a dragon's power. The balance was likely to collapse if a dragon lent power to an individual player. There couldn't be a good relationship between a dragon and a player unless the S.A Group were fools.

'I am likely to become a victim like Sticks.'

The evil eyes king urged Grid, “The destroyer of the future has no time. I recommend you come and see them.”

“There’s no time? What are they busy doing?”

“They have to sleep. They sleep 23 hours a day.”

“ ... ”

It meant the hatchling was only awake for one hour a day! My god, it was Grid’s first time seeing a creature who slept more than Noe. The evil eyes king looked at the amazed Grid and added an explanation, “The dragon will grasp the truth of the world the moment it hatches. In order to digest that enormous amount of information, the physical and mental expenditure is so huge that rest is essential.”

He seemed worried that Grid would look down on the hatchling. Grid thought for a moment before nodding.

“Yes, let’s meet. Instead, give me a minute.”

He didn't want to meet the hatchling, but it couldn't be helped. Grid was curious about the existence of a dragon.

‘Let's talk with Lauel before meeting the dragon.’

“Is the hatchling really here?”

Surprisingly, the place where Grid went to with the evil eyes king was Reinhardt Castle. It was the castle where Grid normally lived. The dragon was living in his home? Yet the owner of the castle didn't even know about it? The evil eyes king spoke to the bewildered Grid, “This is a great being. It is natural to make their will a reality...”

“It is great that they can live in someone else's house without permission...”

No rent was being paid. Grid grumbled about it while moving to the top floor of the castle. It was a space containing the bedrooms of Grid, his family, and

Mercedes. The evil eyes king opened the biggest door. It was Grid's bedroom.

“...?” Grid's confusion grew. He entered the bedroom with a bewildered expression and became astonished. The scenery in the bedroom was completely different from normal. It was decorated with gold treasures and the size was 10 times larger.

“What is this?”

Was it possible to do internal construction without him knowing? No, it was impossible. He had woken up here this morning. This space didn't look like this in the morning. This was the power of magic. Grid belatedly noticed and turned to one side. There was a huge bed that was big enough for 20 adult men to lie on. A black shadow was wriggling between the lace being blown by the soft wind.

‘Using my bed...’

Grid gained some knowledge that he wasn't curious about. While imagining a lizard several times bigger than a human crouching on the bed, Grid quietly approached it. Then the lace was lifted.

"You came." A girl with blue hair was lying on the bed, and she welcomed Grid.

"...Ah!" Grid couldn't help exclaiming. The girl was so beautiful that Grid was forced to lose his soul despite seeing beautiful people like Irene, Mercedes, Yura, Jishuka, and Sehee every day. Her facial features were as beautiful as a jewel, and the harmony between them was perfect. No, it was more than perfection. It was a transcendent beauty that humans couldn't even imagine. The girl's languid eyes made him lose his soul while he found her mouth cute. Simultaneously, valor could be felt from his thick eyebrows.

Grid was suddenly reminded of a woman. '...Marie Rose.'

She was a vampire duke with all types of charms. Yes,

the girl in front of him was like a teenage version of Marie Rose.

“You are staring too obviously.”

How bewitched was he? Grid stared at the girl’s face for a long time before belatedly coming to his senses. She was a beautiful girl, but she wasn’t a human and the name Nefelina above her head was blue. This girl was a hatchling who was less than two years old. A young insane dragon...

[You have met the destroyer of the future—Nefelina.]

[The magic power that is the root of the world turns your presence into dust. All types of actions are sealed due to the overwhelming inability to cope.]

[You have resisted.]

[Nefelina is not yet an adult, but she is the only one with an intact spirit among the existing dragons.]

[This encounter is very special!]

“Hmm, I’m sorry. My magic power is uncomfortable for you.”

“N-No, I’m fi...ne.”

To think there would be a day when he would have to talk with honorifics to someone younger than Lord...? Grid was surprised, but it was something he had to do. On the one hand, he was very relieved. It was because a transcendent being who saw humans as ants had apologized to him. She illegally resided in a person’s house, but this was from the viewpoint of a person. Yes, it was clear that Nefelina was showing him the utmost courtesy. In the first place, the system confirmed that she was sane.

‘No, this... Does this mean the other dragons aren’t sane?’

A chill went down Grid’s spine.

“Human. Grid,” Nefelina called out Grid’s name in a gentle voice. She was laughing with her eyes curved in the shape of a half moon. The difference between her and Marie Rose was clearly shown at this moment. Marie Rose’s smile stimulated primal lust while Nefelina’s smile had a refreshing feeling that washed away those instincts.

“Yes, please say it,” Grid responded politely. He already forgot this opponent was an illegal resident and that she was a child who was just one year old. Nefelina spoke to him while smiling, “I have to grow up strong and well. This requires many nutrients. You shall give me 100 cows and pigs every day from now on.”

Ttiring~

[A new quest has been created.]

[Hatchling’s Livestock]

[Difficulty: SSS

Nefelina is trying to make you her supplier. She hopes that as the king of a country, you will feed her and keep her warm.

Quest Clear Conditions: Feed Nefelina 100 cows and pigs every day.

Quest Clear Rewards: A very slight rise in affinity with Nefelina every 100 days.

Quest Failure: A significant drop in affinity with Nefelina.]

[Would you like to accept the quest?]

Grid stared at the quest window for a while before coming to his senses and gritting his teeth. "...Do you see me as a pushover?"

The evil eyes king paled at Grid's unexpected reaction. "K-King! The destroyer of the future is someone we don't dare meet... Don't go against her will!"

“Be quiet, you pushover.”

“ ... ”

“It is ‘destroyer of the future’, not ‘destroyer of the present’. Isn’t that right?” Grid glared at Nefelina lying on the bed.

He woke up after having Nefelina see him as a pushover, and now he realistically analyzed the situation. Then he concluded that he didn’t have to fear Nefelina. It was due to two reasons. First, she lacked the presence of Vampire Duke Marie Rose. Marie Rose was so bewitching that she froze all actions of the target. This meant that the current Nefelina was below the ‘sealed state’ of Marie Rose.

Second, he noticed it late because it was covered by the blanket, but Nefelina’s human transformation magic was unraveling. Her body on the bed was two times fatter than it was originally, and a tail had emerged from below the blanket. The ability to maintain this polymorph for only a short amount of time showed her magic power

was weak. Well, humans couldn't even use polymorph in the first place.

‘She might be a dragon, but she is a hatchling that’s less than two years old. She isn’t as absolute as I thought.’

As the evil eyes had said in the past, Nefelina couldn’t exert the full power of the dragon until 1,000 years had passed. In 1,000 years, Grid would’ve already died of old age. Thus, Grid might respect Nefelina, but there was no reason to be afraid of her. With Grid glaring at her, Nefelina was so startled that she hiccuped. “...Hiccup!”

Then she spoke in a hesitant voice, “...Only 10. Then I will give you the dragon’s blessing...”

[The quest ‘Hatchling’s Livestock’ has been changed to ‘Hatchling’s Request’.]

[Hatchling’s Request.]

[Difficulty: S

Nefelina is a bit greedy. She hopes that you will feed her in moderation and keep her warm.

Quest Clear Conditions: Feed Nefelina 10 cows and pigs every day.

Quest Acceptance Reward: The dragon's blessing.

Giving up the Quest: A significant drop in affinity with Nefelina. The dragon's blessing will be taken back. The dragon's curse will occur.]

“Um...”

10 cows and pigs were 20 animals a day. This was a burden. It couldn't be resolved with an ordinary player's power, and it was a considerable waste for Grid.

‘However, if I refuse... Nefelina will command the evil eyes to give her food.’

He might not be able to get the dragon's blessing, but he had to make a suitable compromise. After a moment of

distress, Grid nodded. “Let’s go with three.”

“...T-Then my stomach will growl!”

“In exchange for three every day, I won’t ask for a monthly rent.”

“...” Nefelina’s eyes shook. She was seriously distressed.

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Chapter 982

“What about five each?”

“Three each.”

“Then four each?”

“Three each.”

“Three is too few.”

“Three each!”

“...I’ll think about it. Come back tomorrow.”

“Three each!”

“I told you to come back tomorrow!”

“Yes...”

Surprisingly, Nefelina was very careful. During the

negotiations, Nefelina didn't use the power of a transcendent species nor did she threaten him by referring to it. Instead, she tried to find a line that would satisfy both parties involved.

“I heard that dragons consider all things in this world as insignificant. They are supposed to be cruel, selfish, and capricious from a human's viewpoint, yet she is different from the story. Is she perhaps in a disadvantageous position? That she can't grow without being beholden to us...?” This was Lauel's guess.

However, Sticks stubbornly shook his head. “A dragon awakens most of their magic at the moment of birth. In fact, the space reconstruction magic that Nefelina maintains is something that ordinary human magicians can't imitate. Additionally, to use it alone with polymorph... She is an existence that can live well enough without human help. 100 cows and pigs? She can slaughter them in a matter of minutes if she wanted. She can also kill all the humans protecting the livestock.”

“Then why is Nefelina trying to negotiate?”

“She is crazy.”

“...?”

“She is out of her mind. That hatchling is crazy.”

Dragons weren't social animals. They were arrogant and selfish because they were the most outstanding race in the world. Just as humans didn't care about knocking down an ant nest when building a house, the dragon didn't care about other people. They acted as they wanted and made their own way. From the viewpoint of a human, Nefelina was completely different from ordinary dragons.

“No, how is this crazy...? Isn't it common sense?”

“It is crazy when considering a dragon's common sense. Originally, dragons can't be evaluated with our common sense. From our point of view, they are always selfish

and and erratic.”

“Is it because she is still a hatchling?”

“It is meaningless to argue about age because the dragon’s thoughts are formed the moment they are born.”

“Hrmm... Then what should I do?”

“What should you do? A crazy dragon isn’t easily seen, so we should study it.”

The feelings of resentment and fear that Sticks had against the dragon species were tremendous. The curse had merely been a moment of fun for the gourmet dragon. Yet this curse caused Sticks to be afraid of dragons as he fought death for the rest of his life. Now, his curiosity toward Nefelina made him shake off his fear.

“Umm... Still, it isn’t easy to dedicate three pigs and cows every day.”

According to Grid, the current price of one pig was two gold and the price of one cow was four gold. This meant that 18 gold were consumed every day. It would be 180 gold for 10 days and 1,800 gold for 100 days. What was 1,800 gold worth? It was worth a huge amount of 2.6 million won.

Lauel glanced at the hesitating Grid with dull eyes. “I think it is cheap to buy the favor of a hatchling. To put it plainly, how much money can you earn from making an item? Why are you dwelling on 18 gold a day?”

“If you think about the value of a hatchling, it is nothing to lose 700,000 won a month.”

“That’s right. It is a lot less money than the minimum wage. You aren’t being a pushover. Isn’t she even giving you a blessing? It isn’t a business where you will lose money. However, if you want to save money, then why don’t you use the kingdom’s money?”

“The kingdom’s money?”

“Yes. Settle the price of the hatchling’s food with the nation’s finances.”

“How can I use the kingdom’s finances for a personal quest?”

“What about it? You are the ruler of this kingdom. Haven’t you forgotten whose money was used to form this kingdom? Why is the king still acting poor? You forgot that you spent your money making the kingdom. You even made up for the loss every time a national business lost money.”

“...Umm.”

Of course, it was a tremendous leap to call Grid poor. It was because Grid had assets worth hundreds of billions of won. Despite this, he was still far from being a chaebol. If Grid were really rich, he would’ve bought a private jet without worrying.

“Okay. Let’s do it.”

As Sticks had said, Nefelina was already a ridiculously powerful entity. It was hard to get rid of her, so he had to negotiate. If he was going to negotiate as the king, then it was better to do it at the kingdom’s expense.

‘Let’s use the nation’s finances!’ Feeling determined, Grid rose from his spot. ‘I wonder what blessing I will receive.’

He was very excited. Grid looked for Irene and Lord while quickly hoping for tomorrow to come. Then he was caught by Lauel who pulled out a different topic. “Your Majesty, it is about the chef you brought from the East Continent. The Poison Master.”

“Idan?”

“Yes. His cooking skill has been stagnant for more than a year.”

“Why?”

“No one will eat even if he cooks dishes. The skill level is increasing, but there seems to be a limit to the experience rise if no one eats it.”

“Why isn’t anyone eating?”

“So far, the Overgeared members have eaten Idan’s dishes while preparing to die for the poison resistance...”

“Now their poison resistance is so high they don’t need to eat?”

“Yes. However, there is a limit to the level of poison resistance that can be increased by Idan’s cooking.”

“What if we feed the dishes to the soldiers?”

“They will die.”

“...He still can’t make normal dishes?”

“The higher his cooking skill level, the better. However, there is still a long way to go. So I’m saying...”Lauel

explained how he planned to use Idan.

Then Grid nodded with delight. “Lauel is truly a genius.”

“Hut... I am lonely but I enjoy this solitude.”

“Uh, yes. Enjoy your loneliness. I’m going.”

“W-What is that?”

“Cool...”

Today, at an intermediate hunting ground near Reinhardt, the players who were hunting hard and collecting items stopped their actions and watched one spot. There were 500 soldiers. They were armed with the mass-produced set and were evidently elite soldiers of Overgeared. Mercedes, the beautiful woman with her name in gold, was at the forefront.

“Where’s the war?”

Why were such elite forces visiting an intermediate hunting ground? The players were bewildered.

“This should be good.”

The procession of soldiers stopped, and a couple and a little boy appeared. It was Overgeared King Grid, Overgeared Queen Irene, and Prince Lord. The legendary knight Mercedes spread out a mat in the middle of the hunting ground.

“Now Irene, let’s sit.”

“Yes.”

Grid and Irene sat on the mat and pulled out tea and sweets. On the other hand, Lord held the sword and started to hunt monsters with Overgeared Skeletons One and Two.

“Hiyah!”

“Kiek!”

“Hahaha! Our son’s swordsmanship is excellent.”

“He is similar to Your Majesty.”

“ ... ”

No, it was a noisy picnic... The Grid couple gazed lovingly at Lord who was fighting.

The players watched the unreal scene unfolding in the middle of the hunting grounds and suddenly realized that their surroundings had become very quiet. There were no monsters when they looked around. It was because the Overgeared soldiers threw stones at any monsters that were visible and lured them toward Lord. The 500 elite soldiers were acting as a mob mall for a single prince!

“That is the diamond spoon I’ve heard about.”

“I-I’m envious...”

They wanted to be Grid's son! The players could only watch from the side, but they didn't resent Grid. No, they felt grateful to him. It was because Grid showed them full consideration.

"Follow me." There was a beautiful woman with a golden name. Nobody knew it, but a legendary knight gave these players a bus ride. She went to every place where a boss monster appeared and attacked it before letting the players finish the boss off. Of course, the items were also transferred. The players experienced an unexpected windfall thanks to the Grid family picnic.

"Hooray for the Overgeared Kingdom!"

"Long live the Overgeared King!"

The excited cries of the players echoed through the hunting ground. The more favorable they were toward Grid, the stronger the kingdom would become.

'Using the family gatherings like this...'

Grid made Irene happy while raising Lord and the Overgeared Skeletons, as well as gaining the favor of the people. This was a plan that had come from Lauel's mind.

“Your Majesty, I've cleared all the boss monsters around here.”

“Um, yes.” Grid received the report from Mercedes and rose from his seat. “Irene. The next hunting ground... No, let's go to the next picnic spot.”

The next day, Grid went to find Nefelina with the evil eyes king. Nefelina was in the form of a small dragon. Her body was around two feet long, and her scales were blue. She had a wriggling tail and large, round eyes that were adorable.

“I will accept four each.”

“Three... Um,” Grid was about to shout ‘three’ when he shut up and asked, “Is that the best concession you can make?”

“That’s right. I must eat four each if I don’t want a sound to come from my stomach.”

“Okay.” He felt that he couldn’t be more stubborn. It was a type of intuition. The experience that Grid had stacked up over the last few years told him that acting more greedy here could ruin their future days. As such, Grid complied with Nefelina’s request. It would be better to show a good image if he was going to establish a deal anyway.

“Since the great destroyer of the future is caring for me, I am willing to accept it. I will give you four cows and four pigs every day.”

“I’m glad you understand. I would’ve gotten upset if you kept arguing.”

“T-That’s right...”

What would happen if a hatchling became angry? Grid thought he did well of letting go of his greed and clapped. Then the door opened, and a person with a pale face entered. Nefelina cocked her round head. “Who is this human?”

“Your exclusive chef.”

“Exclusive chef? Is it a human who will only make my food?”

“Yes, that’s right. It is the minimum of sincerity I should show to a great hatchling.”

“Hum hum. I like it.” Nefelina’s tail moved side to side and hit the floor. She seemed quite pleased. However, this act seemed like a death notice to Chef Idan. “D-Dragon...”

Was it easy to make food for a dragon? Was there a crazy

case like this? Grid whispered to Idan who had lost his soul, “I don’t know what the dragons on the East Continent are like, but the dragons on the West Continent are a very evil existence. You should try to make delicious dishes so you don’t get eaten.”

“Hiik...”

A hatchling was fully resistant to poison. She wouldn’t be poisoned no matter how many of Idan’s dishes she ate. The evil eyes were also a group whose cooking culture hadn’t developed. The hatchling who lived in the evil eyes village wouldn’t have tasted proper cooking and wouldn’t feel that Idan’s dishes were tasteless.

This was Lauel’s plan. He had made a plan to buy Nefelina’s favor while increasing Idan’s cooking skill. In fact, this method was very effective.

“Grid, your attitude is outstanding. I’ll give you an excellent blessing.”

[The quest 'Hatchling's Request' will proceed.]

[You need to give Nefelina four cows and four pigs every day.]

[You have received the dragon's blessing for accepting the quest!]

A golden magic power appeared around Grid's body. It was the first time for a player. No, maybe Grid was the first human to receive the blessing of a dragon. His heart thumped at the thought.

Chapter 983

[Nefelina is checking your condition.]

[Nefelina believes that your stats are insufficient.]

‘Heok. Don’t tell me?’

What was the dragon’s blessing? Grid’s expectations swelled even more. The dragon was observing him seriously, and Grid thought she would make up for what he was lacking.

‘Will she increase my agility or intelligence?’

In fact, it was wrong to say that Grid was lacking power, especially among players of the same class. No, Grid’s average stats were so high that there was almost no one among the two billion players who had higher stats than him. Nevertheless, humans were animals who didn’t know how to be satisfied. Grid coveted more for his relatively scarce stats and hoped Nefelina would know

his earnest heart. He had faith it would be possible with a great dragon.

However, the result was different from what he expected. Nefelina didn't raise Grid's stats.

[Nefelina has given you a blessing so you can overcome your deficiencies!]

[10% more experience will be gained when hunting monsters in the future!]

[20% more experience will be gained when hunting boss monsters in the future!]

“ ... ”

That's right. The blessing that Nefelina gave didn't mean immediate results, but it was a driving force to achieve better results. Grid's excitement was popped like a balloon.

“This is the blessing...?”

He wanted to deny it but it was true. The effect of the dragon's blessing was already shown in Grid's status window, and it could be described as an experience buff. Nefelina looked at him with a grumpy expression. "Is it a curse?"

"No..."

Maybe it was because his expectations were too high. Grid had wanted a dramatic effect like the goddess' blessing that strengthened a skill. Thus, he felt greatly disappointed at the unexpected experience buff effect.

'Ha, I can't believe that a dragon's blessing only gave me an experience buff. Once the buff duration ends... Eh?'

Grid once again confirmed the effect of the blessing and looked like he had been hit in the back of the head with a hammer. He was really shocked.

[Dragon's Blessing]

[★ Growth Blessing ★

Additional 10% experience gain when hunting monsters.

Additional 20% experience gain when hunting boss monsters.]

“...?”

No. There was no ‘duration period’ mentioned anywhere. Perhaps?

‘Is it a buff that lasts indefinitely?’

Experience buffs were very rare and efficient. The general public had few chances to receive an experience buff apart from the reward of the National Competition. However, Grid had a huge amount of reputation points. He could obtain experience buff potions by using the drawing machine of the Reputation Store. This experience buff potion gave an extra 20% experience.

Therefore, he saw the dragon’s blessing and thought it

was worthless. Now he realized it was different. The experience buff potion had a duration of three days while the dragon's blessing was a permanent buff. It meant Grid would always get more experience than others.

‘It is even 20% against boss monsters!’

What if he hunted after taking experience buff potions in this state? He would be able to enjoy a buff effect similar to the first place buff of the National Competition.

“...Gulp!” Grid gulped excitedly after realizing the value of the blessing. Nefelina's tail moved as she said, “You finally realized that I have given you a great blessing.”

He had to admit it. Grid was reminded of the structure of named NPCs. It was practically impossible for a player to catch up with them since there was the player's average level correction effect, as well as their steady increase in level over time. At this moment, a possibility opened up before Grid. It was the possibility of catching up with the leveling speed of named NPCs.

“Thank you!”

The dukes of the empire, the Five Pillars, the grandmaster... And finally, the yangban Garam...

Their backs, which seemed like they would always be ahead of him, were now right in front of his eyes. Grid was filled with joy and embraced Nefelina. Nefelina was currently in the form of a cute little dragon, so there was no reluctance for him to express his affection.

“Hiccup...!” Nefelina’s wings soared up as she was suddenly hugged by the man. “Y-You. This majestic body...! What are you doing?”

“Ah, s-sorry. You are so cute that I made a mistake...”

“C-Cute? I-I am an existence you will always look up to!”

Nefelina flapped her wings, and her body eventually rose into the air. The space reconstruction magic couldn’t cope with the currents of magic power and became

unstable. The surrounding landscape was distorting.

“Hiiik!” The chef Idan was terrified and fainted.

The evil eyes king instantly knelt down and shouted, “Destroyer of the future! Please fix it using any means!”

However, Nefelina couldn’t hear the voice of the evil eyes king. She just growled as she glared at Grid, “You were only able to touch me in the past because I was in the egg! However, it is different now! You can’t do it anymore! I’m no longer a baby, so be careful in the future!”

“Yes, yes...”

Did she have memories of when she was in the egg? Now he knew why Nefelina was so good to him. Grid learned a new fact and vowed not to touch her again in the future.

“Thus, I plan to focus on hunting for the time being.”

This was after he gained the dragon’s blessing. Grid visited Panmir, not Lauel. There was something he wanted to ask Panmir.

“What is the safest area in the volcanic zone near Talima?”

Talima, the dwarf city—it was surrounded by a volcanic area that contained the nest of a dragon Trauka and was a place where players and the empire couldn’t access. Panmir’s expression hardened. “Are you going to hunt there?”

“Yes.”

Once again, there was the nest of the dragon Trauka in the volcanic zone of Talima. One of the legends of the Legendary Great Magician Braham was that he ‘survived the dragon Trauka’, so it wasn’t necessary to explain how strong and ferocious Trauka was.

“If you happen to meet Trauka...”

“I will die. That’s why I’m asking you for the safest area.”

The 1st ranked blacksmith, Panmir—he was superior to Grid in some ways. It was because he learned the dwarves’ techniques. Grid knew that Panmir had visited Talima. He thought that Panmir would know a safe place in the volcanic area. However, the response was terrible.

“Um...” Panmir’s brow furrowed as he thought about it for a long time.

Grid noticed his mistake. “Oh, excuse me. I’m sorry.”

In Satisfy, the value of information was higher than 1,000 gold. They might be colleagues but few people were willing to freely hand over the information they worked hard to collect. In that sense, it was great that Kraugel had provided information about the Behen Archipelago and the Ether Diamond despite not being part of the same guild. Panmir waved his hand. “No, it isn’t that.

The reason I thought for a while isn't that I am uncomfortable but because I truly don't know."

"You don't know?"

"Yes. I was able to visit the dwarves and Talima thanks to the help of another force."

"Another force...?"

"Rothschild."

"Is that a guild name?"

"It is the name of a guild and a real family name."

"Rothschild is that Rothschild?"

"Right. Just as in reality, they have accumulated wealth and influence in Satisfy. They probably realized the value of Satisfy from the moment it launched and made a big investment. In any case, only the Rothschild Guild knows about the current Talima. I don't know which part of the

volcanic zone is relatively safe.”

Grid’s interest wasn’t just the volcanic zone.

“They have great influence...? But I’ve never heard their name in all these years.”

“Rather than move directly, they act in a way that creates lower forces or supports other forces. It was an agent who first made contact with me.”

“Why do they bother moving in secret?”

“That family is originally like that. Well, I guess it is bothersome to deal with everyone.”

“Did they introduce you to the dwarves?”

“Right. At that time, the Rothschild family directly raised their power by dealing with the dwarves, and there were occasional disagreements during the process. They figured it would be better for an easy-to-handle player to obtain the dwarves’ techniques.”

“What was the result?”

“As you can see, I was a free agent and moved to the Overgeared Kingdom. I didn’t meet Rothschild’s expectations.”

“Are you saying a blacksmith like you were abandoned?”

“Haha...” Panmir scratched his head and laughed bitterly. He was ranked first on the blacksmith rankings. Unless there was someone great among the unofficial rankers... After Grid, he was the next best player among the existing blacksmith players. The reason why the Rothschild family could easily discard him meant that the skills of the dwarf craftsmen were beyond imagination.

“Hrmm... Are they a threat to us?” Grid asked after a moment of thought.

Panmir shook his head. “No, that won’t happen. They are aiming to quietly build up wealth. There is no reason for

them to be hostile, and they might even be dreaming of a symbiotic relationship with the Overgeared Kingdom.”

“Indeed... If they were dangerous, Lael would’ve already warned me about them.”

Feeling convinced, Grid nodded and opened the Reputation Store. He used the drawing machine and secured a total of five experience potions. Grid was planning to hunt for at least one month.

‘Let’s go to the Galgunos Temple.’

The volcanic zone was the most ideal hunting ground, but he would die if he didn’t reduce his chances of meeting Trauka. He could afford to die one or twice due to the experience buff, but more than three times would be too much. In the worst case, he could drop an item.

[(Breaking News) Grid’s level-climbing speed.]

20 days had passed since Grid left for the hunting grounds. The royal palace was quiet because most of the Overgeared members were at the hunting grounds. Still, it was hard to say that it was peaceful. There were three months remaining in the truce agreement with the empire.

The movements of the Overgeared Kingdom that wanted harmony with the different species was at odds with the empire's ideology. This was the calm before the storm, and it was an uncomfortable calm.

“What?”

The cries of the soldiers rang out around the clock. Lael was trying to find peace of mind watching Piaro, Mercedes, and Singuled train the soldiers only to become astonished. It was due to Faker's report.

“Agnus visited this place?”

“Yes. It seems he came to meet Elizabeth.”

Agnus was the most wanted man in seven kingdoms. It was alleged that he had murdered several accessory makers. However, Lauel knew it was a lie.

“He is a dangerous guy. Shall I kick him out?”

“Umm... No. Let’s just watch a bit.”

At one time, Agnus was known as a madman and a purely evil person. Now, it was hard to see him as unconditionally evil after calmly analyzing his movements. He had actually protected Irene and Lord.

‘He is more powerful than Grid in a massive war. It would be good to build up a connection with him.’

Lauel touched his chin and ran to the location of Prince Lord. Lord was in the middle of learning from Sticks.

“Lauel, what are you doing here?”Coke ran over and asked after discovering Lauel.

Lauel chuckled.“I want to take a walk with the prince.”

“...? I understand.”

It wasn't going to be an ordinary walk. Coke felt very tense when he saw Lauel and Faker standing side by side.

Chapter 984

‘Crazy!’ This expression was one of the ultimate exclamations commonly used by modern Koreans. Grid had recently refrained from using it. It was a rather low-grade exclamation for a king to use. Grid wasn’t Huroi... So, he needed basic image management. He had no time to care about that right now though.

“Wow, this is really super amazing. My experience is rising at a crazy speed. Isn’t this completely crazy?? Eh? Right, Noe?”

“I don’t know what you’re saying, nyong...”

[You have defeated a Galgunos Skeleton Soldier.]

[You have defeated a Galgunos Skeleton...]

[You have defeated a Galgunos...]

[15,905,099 experience will be divided.]

[15,905,099 experience will be...]

[15...]

[+4 Lightning Sword Born from Enlightenment and Strong Desires]

The reason why the word ‘Enlightenment’ was attached to the sword was simple. It was due to the presence of the Enlightenment skill.

[Enlightenment Lv. 3]

[-A persistent passive.

-Increases character experience and skill experience acquisition by 10.9% and accuracy and evasion by 20.3%.

* Skills attached to myth rated items can be upgraded.]

It increased the experience gained. That’s right. The effect of Enlightenment was like the dragon’s blessing. No, it was better than the dragon’s blessing because the

level could be increased. Grid had been using the Enlightenment Sword like it was his own body, but he had overlooked this effect so far. However, the effect of the dragon's blessing overlapping with Enlightenment was unmatched. The 20.9% increase in experience was applied at all times. This was 0.9% points higher than the experience buff potion which could only be drawn by Grid consuming a large amount of reputation points.

On the first underground floor of the Galgunos Temple, the skeletons were dying, and Grid's experience gauge was filling up. In front, Grid was very disappointed when he first came down here. He had expected stronger monsters that gave more experience to appear, but the monsters here were weaker than the war god follower who had emerged from the grave and the experience given was also lesser.

However, this disappointment was only temporary. Grid's disappointment soon changed to bliss. Unlike the war god followers, Galgunos' skeleton soldiers could be killed quickly. There were five times more of them than

the war god followers, and their speed of respawn was ridiculously fast.

Of course, this wasn't a good thing from a general standpoint. The durability of the skeleton-based undead might be weak, but Galgunos' skeleton soldiers were extremely dangerous because they were advanced monsters over level 350. In particular, they had high attack power in exchange for low health. Their attacks were fast, simple, and accurate. The skeleton soldiers used long spears as their weapon and had a high accuracy and damage. They were threatening to the high rankers who probably had an average defense of 4,000 points.

Unfortunately for them, Grid's defense power exceeded the average. His stamina stat had only reached 2,400 points, but the +3 Valhalla of Infinite Affection raised his defense by 1,600 points. Grid's total defense was close to 6,000. No matter how much the Galgunos' skeleton soldiers tried, they were like eggs smashing against a rock. Moreover, it was a poisonous rock.

[You have suffered 3,900 damage!]

[The +3 Valhalla of Infinite Affection has emitted poison!]

The skeleton soldiers surrounding Grid were affected by the monstrous poison that spread. Their bones turned green, and they lost their health.

[The option effect ‘Black Flames’ has exploded from the +4 Lightning Sword Born from Enlightenment and Strong Desires!]

Grid quickly struck with maximum speed, and the black flames exploded continuously. “Link!”

“Kyak kyak!Kyakyakyak!”

“ ... ”

The skeleton soldiers were helpless as the Blade Aiming at the Gods, Randy, the Overgeared Skeletons, and Tiramet helped Grid. They were poisoned, burned by

flames, slashed by swords, beaten by fists, had their bones crushed, and were tied up by the silver thread. Dozens of skeleton soldiers were incapacitated at once. The large number of monsters that would be disastrous for an ordinary person was a blessing to Grid.

“It is rude to be in front of the best demonic beast of hell!” The few surviving skeletons were killed by Noe, and the finish was perfect.

“I’ll take a break for a moment.” Grid even had some room to relax.

The Unicorn’s Blessing increased the recovery rate of all resources by 20%. Grid rode Overgeared Corn in the middle of the battle to restore his stamina.

[Status: Annoyed.

Depressed.]

(I want a female rider, not male.)

...The Overgeared Corn seemed to be suffering, but Grid didn't care. It was better to summon Overgeared Corn as much as possible to raise the level of favorability.

Summoning Overgeared Corn during a hunt meant he would receive some experience and his level would rise.

‘Every time his level rises, he likes bringing up his favorite subject. By the way, what are they doing?’

Grid cocked his head from where he was sitting on Overgeared Corn. The Overgeared Skeletons were repeatedly picking up the bone fragments scattered throughout the battlefield. He felt uneasy because they resembled Yerim (Sexy Schoolgirl) whenever she showed up at a department store.

‘Don't tell me that they want to have those?’

No. Which player in the world would share their miscellaneous items with their pets? The pet system didn't require it, and he wasn't Nyangmong. Grid wasn't such a pushover. Grid hurriedly got off Overgeared Corn,

swept up the skeleton soldiers running from one corner with Transcended Link, and then started to pick up all the miscellaneous items. Of course, it included the bone fragments of the Galgunos' skeleton soldiers that the Overgeared Skeletons had been carefully looking at.

‘They are from high-level undead, so they will sell pretty well.’

They were thick and ugly pieces of bone. They were so hard that they could be used as material to make defense items. Of course, items made of bone had low durability and were difficult to repair, so Grid didn't mean to make them.

Clack!Clack clack clack!

The Overgeared Skeletons stared at Grid. These normally insidious guys raised their □ □ shaped eyes and waved their fingers around. One of Overgeared Skeleton Two's fingers broke off when it hit their jaw, but it picked the finger up and stuck it back on. It healed immediately.

“You... Do you really want this?”

Clack!Clack clack!

The Overgeared Skeletons nodded as if they had been waiting for Grid to ask that. Their excitement showed in the speed at which their jaws moved.

“Are you interested in the skeleton bones? Why didn’t you want it before?”

The probability of the Galgunos’ skeleton soldiers dropping bone fragments was around 3%. It was a very low probability for a miscellaneous item, which meant the value of the bone fragments might be more than expected. Grid wasn’t willing to give them the fragments. The Overgeared Skeletons were pets that didn’t have a separate affinity bar, and it wasn’t necessary to give them precious gifts. However...

‘Uhh.’

The Overgeared Skeletons couldn't speak, but they were high-grade summons that expressed clear emotions. They were pretty cute and listened well, which meant Grid was fond of them. He had great expectations for them in the future. Evolving skeletons... They had used the death knight and lich skins during the demon king's subjugation. Maybe that could actually become that...

"Okay." Grid was troubled for a long time before pulling something out with trembling hands. They were two bone pieces.

"Take them. They're gifts."

Clack!Clack clack clack!

How happy were they? The Overgeared Skeletons received the bones from Grid and hugged each other before starting to dance. Of course, Grid quickly stopped them. He was worried they would add a 'dancer' to their second list of classes. They couldn't dance, so the Overgeared Skeletons' shoulders drooped. Then after a

while, they checked the bone fragments in their hands and started to place them in the rib cage.

“...Eh?” Grid’s eyes widened at the unexpected behavior. The Overgeared Skeletons were laughing happily after adding one rib bone. The skeletons had become a bit bigger. He wasn’t mistaken. It was a small but tangible change.

At Elizabeth’s workshop...

“He didn’t come.”

Before Elizabeth joined the Overgeared Guild, Agnus had invaded her workshop. It was speculated that the purpose of his visit to Reinhardt had been Elizabeth. Now, he was nowhere to be found.

“ ... ”

Lauel carried Lord while Coke escorted them. The two

men were quiet for a while.

“We missed him.” Faker appeared out of the shadows and reported, “Agnus disappeared after being pursued by the Overgeared Shadows.”

Simultaneously, at a small inn in the market...

“You came,” Euphemina said to the bloody man who entered the room. His robe fell as he sat down, revealing his green hair. It was Agnus, a person who had caused many problems. He was a murderer currently accused of killing many accessory makers. However—

“You have many injuries.”

Euphemina wasn't wary of him. She had found out from their previous meeting that he was different from what the world knew.

‘How many curses did he receive?’

Euphemina's expression was bad as she examined Agnus' condition. Agnus was being subjected to all types of curses, such as weakness, poison, and the inability to recover. Yes, curses. Curses involving the 'story' or 'system' were different from those that naturally recovered over time.

'The only way to resolve the curse is to kill the cursed target or solve the related story.'

It was useless to give him potions. Euphemina pulled out a handkerchief and wiped the blood stains off Agnus' pale face. "You are wanted in seven kingdoms. Do you think it is unfair?"

Agnus nervously brushed off Euphemina's hand and laughed, "Kuku, who am I to feel it is unfair?"

"You didn't kill those people."

"..." Agnus' shoulders trembled. Then he quickly regained his smile. "You don't have to speak so much. You only

came for one purpose.”

There was a person Agnus loved—the only person in the world who loved him. He wanted to revive her, the woman who had gone through terrible things because of him and ultimately left this world. If only to save her...

“I will free Mumud.”

The strength he had built up by not being a helpless victim... All the power had accumulated over the last few years. Agnus was ready to give up everything.

“Instead, be sure to keep your promise.” The smile disappeared from Agnus’ face. The madness was gone, and his golden eyes stared straight at Euphemina.

Euphemina didn’t avoid his gaze. “On my honor, I will keep my promise.”

She was well aware of why the man in front of her had made this choice, and she didn’t plan to betray this man who had suffered all his life. After completing the

Mumud Liberation quest, she would be sure to keep the promise.

...Even if the outcome of the promise made him more unhappy.

Then the visit was interrupted by the hunters who pursued Agnus from other countries. They had monstrous abilities that wrecked Agnus' body and soul as they kept chasing him.

“...Kikik, we meet again.” Agnus stood up and pushed Euphemina out the window. It was his fight. He didn't want the kid to be pulled into a fight that was impossible to win.

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Chapter 985

Murray, Ultina, Violet, Ark, Haken, Rotemon, and Glaucian—this was a list of seven kingdoms that had lost an accessory maker craftsman to the mad killer. Since a production class craftsman was very precious, the loss to the seven kingdoms was very large.

The seven kingdoms had to punish the killer, and the people hoped for it too. Respected craftsmen had been killed. If the royal family didn't take responsibility for it, the trust of the people would be lost and prestige would fall.

“I finally caught you. Dirty and disgusting bastard.”

The hunters from the seven kingdoms flocked into the room. Some were members of the royal knights, some were reputable mercenaries, and some were unknown names. The 15 positions and personalities were all different, but they had one thing in common. They all had outstanding talents. In particular, the skills of the

mercenaries Phildea and Johneman were amazing. They were named NPCs whose names shone brilliantly. It was difficult for Agnus to deal with both of them at the same time under normal circumstances, much less now that he was cursed and weakened.

“Look, Agnus. Stop the unnecessary resistance and come with me.”

Naturally, there were players among the hunters. One of them was Bubat. The role of the initiator was optimized, and he had given great pressure to Agnus during the chase throughout the past few months. If he hadn't left for a while due to the National Competition, Agnus would've already been caught and taken to the guillotine.

“There is a net of thousands of people around the inn. Even if you escape this place by luck, you will be caught soon. Don't make a fuss and go easily.”

The hunters received great support from the seven kingdoms. There were hundreds of troops operating

secretly, and it wasn't a bluff to say there were 1,000 people around the inn. However, Agnus wasn't the least bit frightened. "Why do you talk nonsense every day?"

An awful madness seeped into him. Agnus looked at the enemies surrounding him and recalled his helpless past. It was a time when he had suffered one-sidedly and experienced all types of pain just because he had no power... At the time, he had succumbed to violence but not now. No matter how many times he was frustrated or how much he lost, he couldn't give in. He would rather fall behind. This was Agnus' conviction.

"Wait." Bubat hurried to Agnus who was pulling out his sword without hesitation. "How many times have you been through this already? If you die here after fighting, you won't get your name off the wanted list. We will continue to track you until we place you in the guillotine. You will die every time and suffer damages."

Agnus had to be punished by law in order to escape being a criminal. Before he was sentenced to death by the

guillotine, the curses on him wouldn't be resolved no matter how many times he died. It was better to go to the guillotine than to live as a wanted criminal until he was forced to quit the game. Of course, the penalty for being killed by the guillotine was greater than that of a normal death... It was neater to be punished by law rather than to be constantly chased and killed.

“This is the heart of the Overgeared Kingdom. We will be caught by Grid if we make a fuss here. Won't you be tired as well?”

“I don't really care. Kikik, do you think I'm afraid of Grid?”

“ ... ”

Bubat didn't answer. Agnus stopped for a moment. Grid—a person who had a similar past to Agnus—was a pushover who fought for others despite suffering in a world filled with only perpetrators and bystanders. Had he forgotten his misfortunes and suffering?

Agnus hated Grid. He felt disgusted with Grid's actions and thoughts. Thus, he naturally hated those who mentioned his name. It was enough to kill this person!

“Dyulebul!”

The demon popped out at Agnus' insane cry. It was a demon with a lizard head on a human body. The demon's grotesque appearance stimulated primordial terror. Bubab was well aware of how powerful this ray of light was and cursed, “Dammit!”

A ray of light that dealt 20,000 fixed damage was fired from Dyulebul's mouth. The problem was that an additional 8,000 explosive damage occurred at the point where the rays hit. The small building couldn't handle the explosion. The wall of the inn was blown away from the explosion. The roof was torn down, and the sky was revealed. There were screams from people who were shocked by the sudden commotion.

“...Using any means!” Bubab gritted his teeth. The

Overgeared soldiers would soon come to inquire about what happened, then Grid would find out. Bubab was terribly afraid of him. What happened to the Immortal group that caused a turmoil by invading the smithies of the Overgeared Kingdom? They were ruined. The Immortal group had once been considered as one of the strongest guilds, only to be shattered and scattered like ashes.

‘My personal quest can’t damage the Yak Guild!’ Bubab’s judgment was quick. He took advantage of the turmoil and withdrew. It was the same for the other hunters who were players. For them, Grid was a target to be challenged, not an opponent to be hostile to.

On the other hand, the NPC hunters were different. They were fully aware of Grid’s power but didn’t fear or admire him. It was natural. They were NPCs, not players. Thus, they couldn’t feel Grid’s great existence. The current position of the Overgeared Kingdom was also risky.

“Haap!”

Dyulebul attacked in five second intervals. The fire of his spinning tail was maintained at all times, but the damage was so small that it didn't threaten the hunters. The hunters pulled out their weapons in unison and rushed at Agnus while ignoring Dyulebul. Agnus responded by summoning his death knights and liches.

The hunters' pincer attacks subdued the death knight. Meanwhile, Lich Mumud failed to shoot his powerful spells. It was due to the location. This inn was in the middle of the marketplace. He hesitated because the civilians could be swept away by the spells. This was obviously an act of rebellion against Agnus' orders. Still, it couldn't be helped. Agnus was weakened from all types of curses and couldn't exercise perfect control over Mumud. It was impossible for him to control the strong will of Mumud, a super named existence who he had only obtained because he was Baal's Contractor.

After a few strikes, Agnus was driven to be on the

defensive and quickly suppressed. The hunters restrained their limbs and pointed their swords against his neck while clicking their tongues. “The filthy murderer is going to suffer.”

After a few months, the chase was finally over. The hunters stared at Agnus with hate-filled eyes and tied him up with rope.

“What’s the fuss about in our kingdom?” A blonde girl asked as she burst into the scene. She saw the hunters’ bewildered expressions and introduced herself, “I am Earl Euphemina of the Overgeared Kingdom. I have to ask you to take responsibility for using force freely in a kingdom that’s not your own, placing the people at risk.”

The hunters immediately introduced themselves and bowed. Then they explained, “This is a heinous criminal who escaped after murdering people in our seven kingdoms. The situation was urgent because we were trying not to avoid missing him, so we weren’t able to obtain your consent in advance. We sincerely apologize

and will repay any damage your land has suffered today.”

A heinous criminal who committed murder in seven kingdoms...

Usually, the disturbance that occurred in the process of arresting him should be taken into account by the kingdom. However, Euphemina didn't want to do this.

“Are you certain he is the murderer?”

“That's right.”

“What is the evidence?”

“He was seen at every murder scene.”

“Is that sufficient? What if he was framed?”

“...Are you trying to defend this guy? I doubt the intentions of the Overgeared Kingdom. It has been rumored recently that the Overgeared Kingdom has accepted another species and the empire's anger is great.

Do you intend to become hostile to our seven kingdoms as well because of a murderer?”

“That is a big leap. I just want to confirm the reason why you caused a commotion in the middle of the Overgeared Kingdom. I am just asking a few questions in the process. It is suspicious that you are reacting so sensitively.”

“No, why are you being so strict about catching a criminal? Is there something between the two of you?”

Only Johneman crossed his arms silently. He was a mercenary who didn't belong to a particular country and didn't care about international affairs. Then it happened when the atmosphere was becoming bloody.

“Don't speak nonsense,” the captured Agnus scoffed. He treated Euphemina like she was a stranger. “Is that kid so great? Just take me away. How long do you think I'll be tied up? Eh? You stupid assholes, kukuk!”

“Shut up!”

“If you want me to shut up, gag me and drag me away. Don’t waste my time unnecessarily.”

Agnus was refusing Euphemina’s help. He expressed it so clearly that Euphemina couldn’t go further. As he was dragged away like a dog, Agnus sent a whisper to her, - Don’t come out in the future. It’s annoying.

-But you...

-Shut up. This is none of your business. Don’t worry, I’ll keep my promise.

Agnus was unfamiliar with goodwill. So, he felt uncomfortable and displeased because it was unfamiliar. Euphemina caught the loneliness in Agnus’ eyes and scolded the hunters who dragged him away, “...The Overgeared Kingdom must be thoroughly compensated for the act of daring to use force here.”

That was all she could do.

[Your level has risen.]

He gained five levels. Grid had achieved this feat in just one month. The achievement was made possible due to the National Competition's reward buff. However, it was still an unusually fast leveling speed considering the 1st ranked Chris took more than three months to gain one level.

The outside world was heating up due to Grid's level-up speed. Players from all over the world paid attention as Grid caused an upheaval in the rankings. There was a lot of speculation that it was the effect of the Different Species' King which Grid had newly acquired.

Even so, the interest of the person involved was focused on something aside from his level. It was on the Overgeared Skeletons.

“It isn’t right?”

Clack!Clack clack!

The bone fragments had been dropped by Galgunos’ skeleton soldiers after they died. The name of the item was ‘Bone Fragment of a Skeleton Soldier’, but unfortunately, every piece was different. Some were rib bones, some were clavicle pieces, and some were the left arm bones. Of course, the bone fragments looked the same to Grid, but it was a problem because the bone fragments were different from each other.

The issue was that the Overgeared Skeletons needed bone fragments from the ‘same area’ to attach to their body. For example, if they wanted to strengthen their right arm, they needed a right arm bone fragment.

‘This damn thing... The drop rate for it is too low.’

Why did it need to be the same area? He wondered how many skeleton soldiers he would have to kill in the future

to strengthen all the bones of the Overgeared Skeletons. Since there was a chance that the same parts could drop, he might not be able to get all bone fragment parts after killing tens of thousands of them.

‘The number of times that each area can be strengthened is only once. Thus, a duplicate bone is useless... Huh?’

Grid quickly realized that his worries were useless.

[The Skeleton Soldier’s Bone Fragment has been acquired.]

Clack!Clack clack!

Most of the bone fragments that Galgunos’ skeleton soldiers dropped were needed immediately. That’s right. Unlike his worries, duplicate areas rarely appeared.

‘It is crazy...’

Grid glanced at the Overgeared Skeletons rejoicing at receiving a new bone fragment and once again realized

how fraudulent the good luck stat was. His unlucky life from before he came across Satisfy had been unfair and meaningless. The Overgeared Skeletons were changing.

[The Overgeared Skeletons One and Two have succeeded in strengthening their bones in all areas!]

[The primary awakening has been completed.]

[The stats of the Overgeared Skeletons One and Two have increased significantly!]

The Overgeared Skeletons were now 1.2 times taller than before. With the exception of their skull, all their dried up bones had become fatter. Their physiques were much larger than before.

...Their skulls also grew, but the growth was smaller in proportion to the rest of their bones.

‘I have a good feeling!’

Grid stepped up the hunting. The Overgeared Skeletons

were level 198, and he planned to raise them to level 200 to get the second advancement class. Of course, it wasn't easy. The Overgeared Skeletons were too weak in comparison to Galgunos' skeleton soldiers. Tiramet was summoned, but he only lasted a short time before dying. In the end, Grid hunted the enemies while protecting the Overgeared Skeletons.

Then a few days passed.

[Overgeared Skeleton One and Overgeared Skeleton Two's levels have increased.]

[Overgeared Skeleton One and Overgeared Skeleton Two can change to their second advancement class.]

Grid achieved his goal, and the Overgeared Skeletons danced with joy. With his eyes fixed to one spot, Grid stood still unsteadily. He gulped and was filled with anticipation as he pulled up the list of potential classes for the Overgeared Skeletons.

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Chapter 986

[Possible Class List for Overgeared Skeleton One]

[1. Destroyer Skeleton Miner.

Details: (Good at mining)

2. Destroyer Skeleton Clown.

Details: (Can laugh well)

3. Destroyer Skeleton Dancer.

Details: (Can dance well)

4. Destroyer Skeleton Swordsman.

Details: (Increased proficiency in swordsmanship)

5. Destroyer Skeleton Dancing Smith.

Further information: (Good at dancing and

blacksmithing)]

[Possible Class List for Overgeared Skeleton Two]

[1. Restorer Skeleton Miner.

2. Restorer Skeleton Clown.

3. Restorer Skeleton Dancer.

4. Restorer Skeleton Mage.

Details: (Increased proficiency in magic)

5. Restorer Skeleton Dancing Smith.]

Were the details right?

“...” Grid’s silence lasted a long while. He couldn’t accept the second class list of the Overgeared Skeletons in front of him. Was this a dream or reality? The boundaries were ambiguous and difficult to distinguish. Grid was blank like he had a lock on his mind, only to belatedly

regain his spirit. He tried to analyze the cause of this absurdity.

‘I made the Overgeared Skeletons mine several times.’

In Grid’s memories, he had only occasionally used the Overgeared Skeletons for mining when he was lacking labor. The number of times was small enough to be counted on one hand. Following the first advancement class list, he couldn’t believe there was a miner option in the second advancement class list.

...This was naturally Grid’s subjective memory. At one time, the Overgeared Skeletons were forced to go mining when they were summoned. In particular, it had happened when their levels were low and they were too weak to be useful for hunting.

‘Cough... Yes. Let’s say they acquired the mining skill because I made them mine 100 times. And the clown and dancer options are due to their basic habits of laughing and dancing.’

Yes, the causes of these three classes were understandable. It was encouraging that the classes of swordsman and mage had also opened. Overgeared Skeleton One watched Grid's swordsmanship and Overgeared Skeleton Two watched Grid's magic, leaving room for increased strength.

"It's fine. It's fine..."

...By the way, what was a dancing blacksmith? He couldn't comprehend this even if he conceded 100 times. It was purely absurd.

"Did you dance while I was doing blacksmithing? Eh? How can I believe this?"

It was natural for the Overgeared Skeletons to open the blacksmithing path. Their master was a blacksmith and they had observed him working many times. However, it wasn't just a blacksmith. It was a blacksmith with the word 'dancing' attached...?

‘I wouldn’t worry if it was dancing swordsman or dancing mage.’

That’s right. The modifier being attached wasn’t the problem. Rather, it was good. The problem was that the attached position was wrong.

‘I want the proper combat power for the second class but...’

Grid originally wanted to pick the swordsman and mage for the Overgeared Skeletons. Unfortunately, Grid was well aware of the power of a modifier. The more modifiers an item had, the more powerful and useful it was. A dancing smith was likely to be a class with high potential. Of course, the combat power was low.

‘Giving up the class with a modifier for the ordinary swordsman and magician might give me a feeling of loss...’

Grid was struggling with this and asked Braham,

“Braham, what do you think?”

He didn't expect to get an answer though. Braham's soul was in a very weak state, so he was sleeping almost all the time. Grid thought he would be asleep once again, but Braham woke up at the right time.

-It is better to make them a dancing smith.

Braham's reasoning made sense.

-The first classes of destroyer and restorer are applied as modifiers to the second advancement. It will be the same with the third advancement. As you know, the concept of modifiers is absolute. The more modifiers there are, the higher the 'status' will be. The merits of the class called dancing smith might be small right now, but if you think about the future, it is wiser to choose a class with many modifiers.

Was it because they were the heritage of Shizo Beriache...? Braham was showed great interest in the

Overgeared Skeletons. He actively advised Grid and was a big help to him.

“Okay... I will do so.”

This was an investment for the future. It was in order to make the Overgeared Skeletons have the modifiers of ‘destroyer’, ‘restorer’, ‘dancing’, and ‘blacksmith’ attached to the third advancement classes. Grid nodded and made a decision. “It might feel like a loss right now, but it can’t be helped. You will both become dancing smiths.”

Kyaak!Kya kya kyak!

The Overgeared Skeletons were pleased with Grid’s choice.They laughed and started to dance lightly.

[You have selected the ‘dancing smith’ class for Overgeared Skeleton One. Is this correct?]

“Co...rrect.”

[You have selected the ‘dancing smith’ class for

Overgeared Skeleton Two. Is this correct?]

“That’s right...”

Flash!

Grid didn’t change his decision, and a golden glow appeared around the bodies of the Overgeared Skeletons who were absorbed in their dancing. Meanwhile, Grid felt a bit regretful. He was gloomy because they were now two dancing smiths who would be of no use in combat.

‘Sigh. I need to raise them to level 300 as soon as possible.’

The reason for the slow leveling of the Overgeared Skeletons was because the level difference with Grid was too large. The penalty meant that the Overgeared Skeletons received lesser experience points. However, as the level gap gradually narrowed, the level-up speed of the Overgeared Skeletons would accelerate.

[The second class advancements of Overgeared Skeleton

One and Overgeared Skeleton Two have been completed!]

[The class compensation effect has increased Overgeared Skeleton One's strength and stamina by 50. There is an additional 20,000 increase in health.]

[The class compensation effect has increased Overgeared Skeleton Two's intelligence and stamina by 50. There is an additional 15,000 increase in health and 5,000 increase in mana.]

[The appearances of Overgeared Skeletons One and Two have changed!]

[The information on Overgeared Skeletons One and Two will be updated!]

“Ohhh!”

Once the class advancement was completed, the golden glow was absorbed by the Overgeared Skeletons. The

Overgeared Skeletons now turned into shiny golden chibi skeletons instead of just chibi skeletons. If the previous Overgeared Skeletons were like chewed bones left behind by a dog, the current Overgeared Skeletons were fine skeletons made of gold.

However, their eyes were still the same. The □ □ shaped eyes were still naughty.

‘...I can’t see it.’

It was subtle.

‘Well... it’s fine since they’re cute.’

Grid opened the Overgeared Skeletons’ information.

[Name: Overgeared Skeleton One

Class: Destructive Skeleton Dancing Smith.

Level: 200

Health: 25,824 Mana: 160

Strength: 1,015 Stamina: 450

Agility: 420 Intelligence: 80]

-Class Specific Skills-

[Bone Cracking Lv. 4.]

[There is a low probability of destroying materials made of bone (undead, items, structures, etc.).

Resources Consumed: None.

Skill Cooldown Time: 20 seconds]

[Destroyer Dancer's Blacksmithing Skill Lv. 1]

[-Learn how to make a weapon that is made of 100% bone material.

While making weapons, the skills 'Dancing' and

Skeleton's Patience will always be activated. If a destroyer's skill is used with this weapon, the probability of Bone Cracking will increase by three times. The time it will take to make an item is 20 minutes.

Skill Resource Consumption: Materials needed to make the item.

Skill Cooldown Time: 30 minutes.

★ Due to the nature of the destroyer, there is a possibility that the item being produced will be destroyed. If the item being produced is destroyed, a wide-area explosion that deals 6 times the item damage specified in the production method will occur.

If the damage range is within 10 meters of Overgeared Skeleton One, Overgeared Skeleton One will also suffer damage.]

[Dancing Lv. 1]

[-Dance to provoke any enemy within 30 meters.

There is a 70% chance of the taunt being successful.

Resources Consumed: None.

Skill Cooldown Time: None.

The time required to activate the skill (time required to get into the rhythm): 5 seconds.]

-Skills Learned-

[Skeleton's Patience]

[-A conditionally triggered passive.

LA skill learned from the Legendary Blacksmith's Patience.

Once activated, defense, strength, and health are doubled.

Resources Consumed: None.

Skill Cooldown Time: None.]

[Intermediate Sword Mastery Lv. 7]

[Passive skill.

A skill learned from a master's swordsmanship.]

[Silver Thread...]

[....

...

Omitted.]

[Name: Overgeared Skeleton Two

Class: Restorer Skeleton Dancing Smith.

Level: 200

Health: 19,000 Mana: 5,000

Strength: 50 Stamina: 650

Agility: 220 Intelligence: 1,045]

-Class Specific Skills-

[Bone Sticking Lv. 4]

[-Restores 20% of a skeleton-based undead's health. The damaged part of the target will be restored.

Resources Consumed: 1,00 mana.

Skill Cooldown Time: 26 seconds]

[Restorer Dancer's Blacksmithing Skill Lv. 1]

[-Learn how to make a helmet that is made of 100% bone material.

While making the helmet, the skills 'Dancing' and Skeleton's Patience will always be activated.

The helmet will gain the feature of ‘restoration’, and Overgeared Skeleton Two will show a high survival power if armed with this helmet.

The time it will take to make an item is 20 minutes.

Skill Resource Consumption: Materials needed to make the item.

Skill Cooldown Time: 30 minutes.

★ Due to the nature of the restorer, it may be difficult to make items. It is because the bones used as the material will be intentionally restored and manufacturing processes such as smelting and forging will be reset.

At this point, Overgeared Skeleton Two will have to start producing the item again from the beginning.]

[Dancing Lv. 1]

[Skeleton’s Patience]

[Intermediate Magic Mastery Lv. 7]

[Omitted.]

The Overgeared Skeletons gained six stat points every time they leveled up. Given that level 1 had a basic 10 points for each stat and players gained a 20 point bonus for their first level, the total value of the level 200 Overgeared Skeletons' stats should be 1,224. However, the Overgeared Skeletons had a stats increase due to the second class advancement bonus, the bone strengthening effect, and the various 'usable items' made by Grid.

The total number of stat points was nearly 2,000, which was comparable to that of ordinary level 200 players. It was almost miraculous considering the Overgeared Skeletons were less powerful than players. They literally resembled their master by possessing fraudulent stats. Still, that wasn't the important issue right now.

“This...”

In fact, Grid had great expectations for the potential of the Overgeared Skeletons until their first class advancement. He had imagined that Overgeared Skeleton One would cause massive explosions to crush the bones of opponents while Overgeared Skeleton Two would use wide-area heals. The result was disappointing because they were terrible, unlike his imagination. The reality was that Overgeared Skeleton One could blow up the item while Overgeared Skeleton Two could reset the process...

‘Something garbage like this...’

Grid was forced to bind all his hopes onto the third advancement. The Overgeared Skeletons would have the modifiers of ‘destroyer (restorer) dancing blacksmith’ skeleton. He could still hope for a combat class for the third advancement. Then Braham’s voice entered the ears of the frustrated Grid, -Maybe it is because you are an idiot, but your imagination is poor. Sharing your thoughts are a pain. If this continues, my soul is likely to burst to death before it can recover.

“...?”

How could he be blamed when Braham was going to die anyway? Grid frowned while Braham scoffed.

-Stupid guy. You should be focusing on the provocation skill, not the blacksmithing. One has a wide-range provocation and damage ability while the other can launch an infinite provocation ability. What the hell are you regretting?

“...Ah!”

The Dancing skill didn't specify the 'category' of the enemy. It was even a wide-area skill.

On the other hand, the Bloody Smell option of Malacus' Cloak didn't apply to creatures whose sense of smell had deteriorated like the undead. Additionally, Malacus' Cloak was very dangerous because Grid himself attracted the aggro. However, the Overgeared Skeletons were summons who didn't receive a penalty from dying.

‘This isn’t trash.’

Possibilities started to unfold in front of Grid. He anticipated that the Overgeared Skeletons’ third and fourth advancements would come faster than he had thought.

“ ... ”

The defense of the evil eyes village had ended.

A month had passed, but Peak Sword’s condition was still the worst. He felt uncomfortable and unmotivated. It was hard for him to concentrate on hunting, so even Vantner was worried about him.

“Are you still thinking about that knight?”

The knight whom Vantner mentioned was the leader of the Blue Flames Knights of the Gauss Kingdom. He was a young knight named Apollo. Peak Sword was

traumatised from killing him. It was because Peak Sword saw himself in Apollo's image of fighting for his kingdom. A lonely struggle was the fate of a weak nation.

To be honest, Peak Sword hadn't wanted to kill him. However, he had to fight for the sake of the evil eyes. It was a fair fight, and he had to knock down the enemy. The only thing he regretted now was deceiving the other party who had fought to the end for his kingdom.

Yes, Peak Sword knew all of this. Yet he still felt regretful when the face of the young knight came up.

“...He had only one life.”

Satisfy was only a game to players, but it was reality for NPCs. They couldn't revive.

“Of course, I will kill him if the same thing happens again. I just regret that I didn't say a word to him before he died. He was too strong.”

“Then from now on, say goodbye before killing them.”

“...Eh?”

“Say goodbye and kill. Isn’t that enough?”

“ ... ”

“We’re going to be fighting NPCs. It was a planned future from the moment Grid set up his kingdom. Some of the enemies you will encounter will certainly be good people, and you’ll have to kill them. What if you have a mental breakdown every time? Your mind will soon become exhausted. Will you quit the game?”

“Kuk... Yes, my resolve was lacking. I was too short-sighted. I’ll have to greet the enemy in advance before fighting.”

“Good. That’s the right thing to do. Greet and kill them.”

“Hut... Yes.”

“ ... ”

The two men clasped hands. Their conversation content was obviously missing the main point. The listening Overgeared members thought it was so absurd that they clicked their tongues. It was at this moment.

&Zednos: An explosion has occurred in the southern market.

The guild members who were in Reinhardt were talking to each other in the guild chat.

&Ibellin: What happened?

&Zednos: Agnus is visiting. Maybe he is making a commotion.

&Toon: Agnus is here? Why? Isn't this crazy?

&Jishuka: Yes! He's a crazy guy~

&Ibellin: (/ - _ -) I'm nearby, so I'll be right there.

‘Agnus?’

In the Galgunos Temple, Bullet’s face hardened as he placed pressure on the war god followers with his undead and jiangshi. Agnus was obviously crazy, but he wasn’t a loose cannon. If a crisis that couldn’t be overcome arrived, he would enjoy the situation but always try to avoid the worst situation. Yet he was visiting the capital of the Overgeared Kingdom where they were obviously enemies...? Agnus wouldn’t have intended to cause a disturbance.

‘He seems to be having a hard time these days... Maybe he came here because he wanted to rely on me?’

‘Damn.’ Bullet couldn’t even send Agnus a whisper because Agnus was removed from his friends list. He couldn’t concentrate on the battle. Bullet worried about it before recalling the undead and jiangshi to his side.

“Eh? What happened?” The Overgeared members, who were hunting with him, asked.

Bullet scratched his head. “I’m sorry but I want to take a break. I’ve been hunting for too long.”

“Are you sleeping at that level?”

“...You have dropped from second in the necromancer rankings.”

It took a surprisingly long amount of time to produce the jiangshi, causing him to drop to fourth place.

Nevertheless, Bullet was still a high ranker who was far above the average level of the Overgeared members. This was because the necromancer class was optimized for hunting.

“That was the past. You have to restore your ranking.”

“Today isn’t the only day. I’ll work hard next time. Then I’m going.” Bullet didn’t say anything else and used a return scroll.

He left to help his old idol, feeling grateful and sorry

toward the Overgeared members who hadn't done anything but treat him as an old friend. Still, once he gave his heart, he would never betray or easily abandon the person. This was the man called Bullet.

Chapter 987

By the time Bullet arrived at the scene, many people were already present. The Overgeared Shadows and Sticks analyzed the traces of the battle while dozens of soldiers controlled the onlookers. Lael covered half his face and was in deep thought. ‘This...’

Bullet was able to enter the scene without the soldiers stopping him. His complexion darkened as he looked around the collapsed inn. It was because he saw the traces of Dyulebul’s light ray. Unlike his desperate wish, Agnus was apparently involved in the battle here.

‘However, Agnus didn’t fight because he wanted it,’ Bullet believed this.

Thus, he approached Lael and insisted, “It is clear that someone attacked Agnus first. He wouldn’t intentionally make a disturbance in the Overgeared Kingdom.”

Bullet hoped that Lael would release Agnus from jail.

Lauel made an interested expression. “What is the basis of your claim? Agnus is an unpredictable madman. Furthermore, as the head of the former Immortal Guild, he must be holding a grudge against the Overgeared Kingdom. It wouldn’t be unusual for him to intentionally cause damage to the Overgeared Kingdom.”

“Agnus isn’t a fool. In addition, he doesn’t feel any regrets about Immortal. In the first place, the one who set up Immortal and chased Agnus was Veradin. Agnus himself doesn’t have much interest in Immortal.”

“You should know the truth first before defending him.”

“...!”

“Aren’t you a member of Overgeared? Why are you acting as Agnus’ advocate?”

“I-I’m sorry!” Bullet realized his mistake and hurriedly bowed his head.

‘I should’ve figured out the truth first.’

It was simple. All he had to do was ask Lael a single question, but he was worried about Agnus and skipped the most basic procedure. He was just distracted by Agnus' safety.

‘I’m disappointed.’

Bullet was in a greatly favored position due to Grid. Despite being from Immortal, he had received forgiveness and obtained the Jiangshi Production method. How reprehensible would his behavior be from the standpoint of Grid and his colleagues, who considered Agnus their enemy? Bullet couldn't lift his head.

Then Lael's hard voice was heard, “Please be careful next time.”

“Yes. I will be careful.”

In fact, Lael wasn't disappointed or angry with Bullet.

He knew from the beginning that Bullet was soft-hearted. Grid liked this tendency of Bullet's and accepted him as a colleague. It was hard for Bullet to turn away from his old colleagues. Nevertheless, Grid didn't say this to Bullet because he wanted Bullet to know how to keep a level head.

Lauel spoke to Bullet who was still looking at the ground, "First of all, we have failed to secure Agnus."

"He got away?"

It couldn't be. This was the heart of the Overgeared Kingdom. The place was completely guarded, and there were monsters lurking everywhere. It was impossible for Grid to escape with force, let alone Agnus. Lauel shook his head at the incredulous Bullet. "He didn't run away. He was dragged away."

"Dragged? No way!" Bullet was reminded that Agnus was wanted by seven kingdoms. "T-This can't be..."

Bullet was able to grasp the truth of the situation. Agnus had lost a place to go and hid himself in the Overgeared Kingdom, an enemy kingdom. Then the pursuers of the seven kingdoms followed him and attacked him.

“A-Agnus...”

Bullet shouldn't act like this in front of the Overgeared members, but he was worried about his old idol. When he realized his mistake, he hurriedly shut his mouth. Lael saw this and smiled bitterly. ‘Agnus has his own charm.’

Looking at the early days of the Overgeared Kingdom, Grid had been publicly known as trash. At the time, Grid was filled with poison and was fierce toward many people. Nevertheless, he received deep trust and affection from his colleagues. Agnus could have a similar aspect. He was a person who couldn't be understood without actually experiencing it.

“Lael... Do you know where Agnus was taken?”

“Why?”

“Eh? J-Just...”

“You should give up if you plan to rescue him. He will be guarded by the armies of the seven kingdoms, including some of the best talents.”

As a necromancer and jiangshi maker, Bullet could exert great power in large-scale combat. However, the opponent was the seven kingdoms. It was no different from an ant facing an elephant. Bullet also knew this fact. He never dreamed that he could rescue Agnus. However —

“...I want to help Agnus.”

Bullet wanted to show Agnus that there were people fighting for him. He might've suffered and been betrayed in the past, but it would be different in the future.

“To him... I want to let him know that he isn't alone.”

Agnus' lonely appearance caused great pain to others who were just watching him. Bullet couldn't imagine how much pain Agnus must be suffering. Bullet wanted to heal Agnus, even if it meant sacrificing himself.

However, Lael's reaction was cold. "It isn't possible. Did you forget that you belong to the Overgeared Kingdom? If you step forward, the relationship between the seven kingdoms and the Overgeared Kingdom will become irreparable."

"I'll leave the guild for a while. I won't use the jiangshi. I will never expose a connection between myself and the Overgeared Kingdom, and I won't harm Grid."

Bullet liked both the Overgeared Guild and Agnus. He was sincerely grateful toward those who were willing to be his colleagues and friends. It meant there were no pretenses in his words. Bullet really intended to fight alone and risk everything by himself. Even so, Lael's reaction was cold to the end. "Do you think of the Overgeared Guild as a joke? Do you think you can leave and rejoin as you like?"

“ ... ”

Lauel persuaded Bullet, “I fully understand your feelings. Nevertheless, you have to realize that you are now a member of Overgeared. Do you know why Grid gave you the strong Jiangshi Production recipe? He wants you to grow quickly and become a boon to the Overgeared Guild. Yet you are going to die on your own now? Isn’t that ignoring Grid’s favor?”

“ ... ”

“From the moment you joined the Overgeared Guild and received the Jiangshi Production recipe, you gained the responsibility of being an Overgeared member. Don’t neglect your responsibilities for your personal feelings.”

Lauel also felt regretful. He pitied Agnus and thought it was a waste of Agnus’ power. This didn’t mean he was in a position to go forth for Agnus’ sake. It was impossible, so it was better to throw away these lingering feelings.

Bullet lamented, “It could be resolved if we can clear up Agnus’ false accusations...”

“Are you sure he is being framed? How can you be sure Agnus didn’t kill those people?”

“I’m certain. Agnus might kill strong people, but I’ve never seen abuse the weak. Look back at the incident with Elizabeth. Agnus needs an accessory maker. Would he make himself the public enemy of accessory makers by killing them?”

Lauel had also thought about this part, but he was missing something important. “Do you know who the real culprit is? At the very least, there should be a suspect you can point at.”

“Maybe it is the Yatan Church.”

“The Yatan Church?” Something flashed in Lauel’s head. It was because he saw a new possibility.

“Didn’t he help Queen Irene and Prince Lord in attacking the Vatican? Agnus had a symbiotic relationship with the Yatan Church yet he helped these two people. It is no different from an act of betrayal.”

“ ... ”

“I don’t know if you have any idea about this, but the Yatan Church has been struggling for the past 10 years because of a certain enigmatic figure and they are sensitive due to Yura’s betrayal from a few years ago. I think they made a plan to punish the new traitor, Agnus, and set an example.”

“Hrmm...” A hopeful scheme came to Lauel’s mind.

It would make Agnus indebted to them while getting rid of a problem he had been concerned about. Lauel asked Faker, “Do you know the whereabouts of Rose?”

“We are gradually approaching her. We’ve found a few traces and will be able to locate her soon.”

Rose was the number one black magician after Yura, and she had become one of Yatan's Servants. She was one of the villains who summoned the 32nd Great Demon Belial. Additionally, she was one of the leaders of the raid on the Vatican last year. From the position of the Overgeared Kingdom, Rose was someone who had to be punished. Grid and the Overgeared Kingdom had no intention of forgiving her for trying to harm Irene and Lord. They pursued her steadily.

“Wait a moment...”

“...?”

Lauel had Bullet and Faker wait beside him while he focused on whispering to someone. How much time passed by...?

Lauel swept back his silver hair and laughed. “Bullet, I’ll give you a smarter way.”

“What is it?” Bullet had been waiting for a while. He

couldn't help feeling nervous when Lael didn't answer him. Finally, a guild message popped up.

[The guild master 'Grid' has attached a kill order on the player 'Rose.']

“Eh...?”

What was this all of a sudden? Lael finally explained to the embarrassed Bullet, “Threaten to trample on her.”

What would happen if one of Yatan's Servants revealed that the true culprit was the Yatan Church? Agnus would be able to get rid of his false accusations.

‘I have to pay him back for helping Lord and Irene.’

On the first underground floor of the Galgunos Temple, Grid set the kill order on Rose and felt a blockage in his body become unblocked. He had felt disgusted at owing the bastard Agnus. Now he felt good at the chance of

paying off his debt. It was a good situation because he wanted to punish Rose anyway.

‘By the way, this isn’t an easy decision.’

It was obvious, but in the future, the Overgeared Skeletons One and Two would use their own weapons and helmet. This would optimize their attributes and allow them to demonstrate their stats more efficiently.

‘They naturally need the best production methods...’

There was one big problem. The Overgeared Skeletons could only learn one production method. Teaching the Overgeared Skeletons the best production method was difficult due to all the materials necessary for the item production.

‘This means the Overgeared Skeletons won’t be able to use blacksmithing that often, and they can’t fully utilize their skills.’

However, if he taught them a production method with

materials that could be obtained easily, the performance of the weapon and helmet would be insignificant.

‘I have to coordinate it well.’

He needed a production method with materials that were relatively easy to obtain, but the performance of the items produced also needed to be excellent.

“...Hmm?” Grid stared at the hard bones of the Overgeared Skeletons. His gaze was so strange that the dancing Overgeared Skeletons were startled.

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‘It would be good to make items with their bones.’

Grid tapped the Overgeared Skeletons’ golden bones.

They were dense and hard enough to make no sound.

‘Bones are crafting materials that can pursue extreme sharpness, but they are weak in durability. However, the bones of the Overgeared Skeletons aren’t weak at all. It is fine to classify them as a blue orichalcum class material.’

The Overgeared Skeletons themselves were a special existence, and they were strengthened by absorbing the bones of skeletons that were over level 350. Moreover, there was room for further strengthening in the future. There were the bones of undead stronger than Galgunos’ skeleton soldiers. This was under the premise that Grid should save the bones of humanoid undead.

‘It is a problem that time will solve.’

In the end, the bones of the Overgeared Skeletons were a crafting material that would rise in grade over time and the supplies were easily obtainable. The Overgeared Skeletons could pull out their own bones whenever they made an item. The reason for this improbable idea was Overgeared Skeleton Two's restoration ability.

That's right. Grid was dreaming of infinite power with advanced items. Theoretically, it was a perfect idea. There was one fatal problem though.

‘I have to consume one of the Legendary Blacksmith's Creation slots.’

The premise of this item used the bones of the Overgeared Skeletons as a material. Such an item didn't exist, so Grid had to create it himself. Moreover, the use of the Legendary Blacksmith's Creation skill was limited, so he had to be careful.

‘This is a good investment if I consider that the bones of the Overgeared Skeletons can be strengthened...’

It was important to think carefully. He rubbed the round skulls of the Overgeared Skeletons, who were making uneasy expressions. Then a notification window popped up in Grid's field of view.

[There are five minutes left in your daily access time.]

Over the past month, Grid had been raising his level at a speed different from others. It was possible because Grid's ability to hunt was exceptional, but it was also because of his efforts. Grid focused on hunting 16 hours a day. He reduced his sleeping time to focus on the game and thoroughly managed his eating and exercise schedule. Well, it wasn't just something he was doing now. He had been maintaining this schedule for the last few years.

“Umm...”

Grid logged out and returned to Shin Youngwoo. His expression was exhausted as he got out of the capsule. He lay in bed and wanted to sleep until tomorrow

morning. His mind was tired enough to rest for a day.
The psychological factor had a huge impact on him.

After the big event that was the demon king subjugation, a strange sense of inertia dominated him. Grid tried not to show it to others, but his mind and body were exhausted. He wanted to have a good rest as psychological compensation for the big event. Then he was reminded of his past and corrected his heart.

‘I can’t go back to the old days...’

He couldn’t be careless. The other competitors were trying as hard as he was. He might be ahead right now, but there was a chance for them to catch up and for him to fall into hell.

‘Wake up.’

Youngwoo slapped his cheeks, washed his face with cold water, and did simple exercises. Then he took a shower and put on a coat. Today was the 1st anniversary of

Khan's death. It was already the third cycle in Satisfy, and he had always visited Khan's grave to maintain it. However, there was only one way to commemorate it in reality. It might be a way to appease Youngwoo's heart.

Ding dong~!

He got into the elevator and pressed the button for the ground floor, but it stopped downstairs. Having received the signal that Youngwoo had activated the elevator, Toon immediately reacted to it. "Are you going somewhere?"

"I'm going to have a drink."

"Yes, let's go."

Youngwoo waved his hand at Toon who was grabbing a coat. "I'll go alone."

"No." Toon was determined. Youngwoo might've accumulated many relationships in Satisfy, but he was still a lonely person.

“If you want to drink alone, I’ll sit at another table and wait.” Toon had become quite skillful in Korean.

Youngwoo smiled bitterly. “Thank you, but today, I want to feel alone. Don’t worry. Don’t you know? I am very popular these days.”

At the very least, he was safe in South Korea. To the people of South Korea, Youngwoo was a hero.

‘Today is Khan’s first death anniversary, and he’s determined...’

It was as expected. Toon looked at the stubborn Youngwoo and nodded. “Then let’s ride separate cars. I will stay at a distance so you can feel alone.”

“ ... ”

“This is the maximum I can concede.”

“...Yes, I understand.”

Youngwoo went down to the underground parking lot with Toon. Then Youngwoo got in the car he had been driving for five years while Toon climbed into a separate one.

Two rare and high-value vehicles appeared on the road, catching the eyes of the people.

Rose's response was quick. She was the 1st ranked black magician and an official of the Yatan Church. Moreover, she had a pretty good visual. Her ability, presence, and beauty meant she was quite popular among the rankers. Rose knew how to take advantage of this popularity. She made headlines when she appeared on a popular TV program and revealed that the Overgeared Guild had set a kill order on her.

“A group is suppressing an individual. One of the best guilds in the world, which should be an example for all, is driving one person to the brink. What should I do? Do

I have to abandon my efforts over the past few years and quit Satisfy? Won't this indiscriminate violence of the Overgeared Guild continue in the future? People who are powerless individuals like me—won't you also become a victim in the future?"

The world was overturned. Countless people blamed Grid and the Overgeared Guild. This was different from what had happened with Immortal. The effect was greater because Rose emphasized the 'group' going against the 'individual.'

In any case, the act of a group suppressing one person was bound to be seen as cruel and cowardly. The masses, who were mostly powerless individuals, didn't condone the actions of the Overgeared Guild. In the words of Rose, it made them feel like they could be victims as well. As such, they felt the need to hold the reins so the Overgeared Guild couldn't run wild.

The Overgeared Guild responded immediately.

The mouth of the Overgeared Guild—no, the spokesman Huroi made an official statement, “As one of Yatan’s Servants, Rose has slaughtered numerous players and NPCs. Of course, it is her role in the game and her right to do so. Thus, I wouldn’t usually blame her for her actions. But the story is different when the Overgeared members and the Overgeared people are directly affected. Just as she has the right to act, we have the right as well. It is natural to assume responsibility if she has done something wrong. This isn’t indiscriminate violence but revenge. The Overgeared Guild will get revenge on Rose. She will be held accountable for the sins she has committed against us.”

It wasn’t a group oppressing a powerless individual. Huroi emphasized this, and there was a sufficient effect. In particular, many people hated Rose because of all the killings she committed as one of Yatan’s Servants. Groups advocating for the Overgeared Guild were formed. However, not everyone defended the Overgeared Guild.

-Dogs□□ The Overgeared ones are running around as usual.

-Look at how they're controlling the vampire cities.

-XX guys.It is really disgusting that their country is earning money by monopolizing the hunting grounds.

-Even the National Competition rewards were almost all swept up by the Overgeared members.They're having a full meal.

-What bullshit are you talking about?The Overgeared Guild got the rewards in the National Competition because they're strong. The hunting grounds are also in their territory, so they can exercise their rights.The dungeon size is limited. Why would you want to share it with everyone else?Even Overgeared Guild One is in a saturated condition.

-It is funny to see the dogs insulting the Overgeared Guild.The Overgeared Guild is having a full meal?Why

are you cursing at them when they're enjoying their own efforts?

-The struggles of the Overgeared Guild are things we should enjoy together. □□□□

-By the way, the Overgeared Guild is too harsh. Don't you remember how Katz used to act before joining the Overgeared Guild? Let's say someone wants to get revenge on Katz now. Won't they be hit by the Overgeared Guild's kill order?

-Peak Sword overreacts every time to racial discrimination. Human garbage.

-My group asked Pon to stop teasing Vantner about being bald and was ignored...

-What group?

-The National Baldness Association.

-This...

-The Overgeared Guild can't be allowed to continue like this. One day, the Overgeared Guild might dominate everything.

Surprisingly, many people were anxious about this. It was a more primitive fear that came before envy or jealousy. It was an inevitable phenomenon, no matter how well the Overgeared Guild managed their image. However, the Overgeared Guild wasn't shaken. This was something they had experienced every time, and they were already prepared for it.

Lauel advised Huroi, "You don't have to respond to public opinion. Just strongly express our opinion to punish Rose, no matter what the public says."

Their intention was simple—place psychological pressure on Rose. Rose noticed the Overgeared Guild's hard heart and immediately tried to negotiate. She sent a friend request to Lauel in the Overgeared Guild. Then as soon as he accepted it, she sent a whisper, -Why are you doing this? Is it because of the Vatican invasion?

-Yes. Our queen and prince were in danger at the time because of you. It is something we can't let you get away with.

-...No, what is this? I never expected the prince and queen of the Overgeared Kingdom to be there! In the first place, I was just performing a quest! I didn't lead the attack on the Vatican. Why are you holding me responsible?

-You didn't know the royal family of the Overgeared Kingdom would attend the pope's reelection ceremony? Don't you know about the relationship between the pope and the Overgeared Kingdom?

Lauel interrupted Rose's excuses and gave her a choice, - Be hunted by us for the rest of your life or testify about how is Agnus being framed and neatly clear up the relationship between us. Choose one or the other.

-Agnus? Did Agnus join the Overgeared Guild? No, that is impossible. Are you paying off the debt for him helping the queen and the prince?

-You just have to give an answer.

Rose wasn't an easy opponent. She was a person who could see through even the smallest gap. Moreover, she was one of Yatan's Servants. It wouldn't be good to reveal a gap to a powerful enemy that could become 'named' if certain conditions were met. Rose refused, -I don't want to.

What would happen if she betrayed the Yatan Church? She couldn't flee to hell like Yura had done.

-You will regret it.

-Hmmm, we'll see. How will public opinion change if I post a video every time you commit violence against me? Just watch. Be ready for the Overgeared Guild to get isolated if you touch me.

It was a tough response, but Lauel just laughed.

Youngwoo found a stall in a remote location. It had been a long time since he started avoiding crowded places.

“Oh, my. a famous person is here.”

When Youngwoo entered the stall, the owner immediately recognized his face and started flattering him. The world’s top star was in such a humble place. It was unknown if the food and drinks here would suit a special person like Youngwoo. Yet Youngwoo just sat down and smiled. “Well, five years ago I didn’t even have enough money to buy ramyun. Please give me a bottle of soju and a plate of chicken feet.”

“Omo, really? Ah! That’s right! I heard rumors that you are a self-made man. It is amazing for your young age.”

“I was lucky.”

“How could it only be luck? It is your ability and talent to grab onto the luck.”

Youngwoo's heart eased as the stall owner comforted him. Shortly afterward, the soju came out, and Youngwoo filled up a cup. The smell of alcohol hit his nose, and he was reminded of the first day he met Khan. The man had lost his wife and son and lived in a drunken state. The smell of alcohol had been terrible just from standing beside him.

‘How much pain was he in?’

Khan had been alone in the world. The weight of the solitude and despair that he had felt couldn't even be imagined. Nevertheless, Khan had endured the solitude and despair, even making up his mind and stopping his drinking. Thinking about that time, Youngwoo found it funny.

‘His hands shook from the alcohol, and he couldn't even hold a hammer.’

How absurd was his laugh when he saw that a blacksmith couldn't even hold a hammer? Then Khan

stopped drinking and managed to hold a hammer. He taught many things to Youngwoo, who had been severely lacking.

‘Please be happy.’

Khan had been alone the first day they met, but he wasn’t alone now. He must be laughing every day after being reunited with his family in heaven. Youngwoo believed it. Every time he emptied his glass of alcohol, he prayed to God that his belief was real.

“ ... ”

How much time passed by...? The uneaten chicken feet and udon soup became cold. The surface of the raw cucumber that had come out as a basic snack had also dried up. Only the three bottles of soju were empty.

‘It is already time...’

Youngwoo wanted to recall more memories of Khan, but he couldn’t afford it. He had to go back to keep his

schedule for tomorrow. After checking the time, the sad Youngwoo raised his last cup of alcohol to the sky.

‘I’ll have another drink next year.’

Did humans have souls? There was no definite answer. Even so, people reminisced and mourned the dead again and again. Youngwoo did the same thing for Kham. The last cup was emptied, and Youngwoo got up from his seat.

“Scumbag,” a voice suddenly entered his ears. He turned and saw four men in their mid-20s watching him with drunk expressions.

“Setting a kill order on people and giving them a hard time... You just want to wield your strength because you have it, right? Scumbag, a real scumbag.”

Youngwoo ignored them. He took out cash and politely handed it to the stall auntie. “I’m sorry, please pack up the leftovers.”

“Omo, of course. I’ll pack them quickly.” Wanting to avoid a fight, the anxious auntie started to place the remaining chicken feet into a takeaway container.

New guests entered. Simultaneously, the four men got up and surrounded Youngwoo. “This is a real tough guy. You are packing up leftovers when you make so much money? If it were me, I would give it to a passing dog as a gift. However, you’re pretending to be such a great guy.”

“What’s going on over there?”

“Ah! It’s Grid!”

The new guests glanced over and were surprised to recognize Grid. Then they pulled out their phones without anyone saying anything. They pretended to be taking photos, but they were actually shooting a video. Satisfy’s supreme person was arguing at a street stall! This was naturally a big issue.

“Hey. Are you ignoring me? If a person speaks, you ought to say something. Just once.”

“This jerk must be scared. If this were in the game, you would set a kill order on me, right? Huh?”

“Let’s try it once. Pagma’s Swordsmanship! Yap! Yap! Like this!”

“Puhahaha! Crazy! How funny!”

Youngwoo would be seen as a coward if he stayed still. The quarrel got more intense. The four men surrounding Youngwoo imitated Pagma’s Swordsmanship, mocking and threatening him. Then one person was swept up by the atmosphere and crossed the line. He pretended to hit Youngwoo with a bottle of alcohol.

“Oh, my. Young man!” The stall owner, who was trying to stop the four men, was stunned. Meanwhile, the guests who were filming screamed.

“...Eh?”

Youngwoo grabbed the bottle of alcohol that was threatening him and quietly placed it on the table. Then he raised his hand toward the men surrounding him. His actions were natural and lightning fast, shocking the men. Yet Youngwoo didn't hit them. His raised hand slowly lowered and tapped their cheeks once. The result was amazing.

“Huung...”The sturdy bodies of the men flopped down.

“Eh?” The people filming and the owner trying to stop them had wide eyes, and they looked like they had seen a ghost. It wasn't a slap. That was just a hand on their cheek yet their legs lost strength. This was something that people couldn't understand.

“Thank you. Be prosperous.”

In the silence, Youngwoo picked up the packed chicken feet and left the place after saying goodbye to the auntie.

He turned his gaze toward Toon who was waiting in front of the stall.

“Is this Lael’s doing?”

“...”

It was easy to guess. The men who had been waiting in the background until Youngwoo finished and the onlookers who had appeared suddenly and started filming... In the first place, those who started the argument emphasized the Rose incident. They also mocked his correct action of packing up the leftovers.

“It is an image-making plan.”

Three hours later, the video titled ‘Grid Makes 4 Men Give Up in Reality’ was ranked number one around the world. People praised Grid’s character after suffering a one-sided insult. They questioned what Rose must’ve done to make Grid set a kill order on her.

-In the first place, the Immortal Guild received the kill

order because they killed the Overgeared blacksmiths. Has there been another case where the Overgeared Guild issued a kill order? No. Rose is the first since then.

-In the end, it means Rose made a terrible mistake.

-Right. She must've done something very dirty.

-Look at Grid bowing 90 degrees to the stall aunty.

-God Grid packed up the chicken feet...

The staff of the Patriotic Society—the elite members who had mastered four basic languages—used the keyboard to manipulate public opinion on the Internet around the world. Public opinion started to shift one-sidedly. Now there were few people defending Rose. Rose had good judgment skills and soon raised a white flag.

-...I'll try to clear Agnus' name. However, it must be done secretly so the Yatan Church doesn't know I have

betrayed them.I believe that you will give me some reprieve.

-Three days.No more than that.

-That is too short...

-Don't speak long words.

-...Yes.I'll do my best.So please get rid of the kill order on me.

It was true that there was nothing more foolish than being hostile to the Overgeared Guild right now. She was keenly aware of this, but after a long period as a high ranker, her pride had risen sharply. Inwardly, Rose sharpened her knife. Sooner or later, she would summon a new great demon with Prince Benoit and would get revenge on the Overgeared Kingdom.

Chapter 989

Youngwoo drank a lot the previous day, but the burden on his body was small. It was because he drank very slowly. This was the advantage of controlling his pace.

“This is a hangover soup that Mother cooked.” Jishuka came and handed Youngwoo a bottle of water as he woke up. She was dressed comfortably, but it was a bit too comfortable. Her alluring collarbone and omitted were more alluring under her loose top.

“T-Thanks.”

It was a happy thing to face the sexy features of one of the world’s best beauties in the morning, but it was also a challenge. Jishuka watched as Youngwoo drank the bottle of water. “Aren’t we like newlyweds eating together in the morning?”

“Pfft!” Youngwoo spat out the water and turned his gaze toward the window. It was toward Jishuka’s building

that was completed a few days ago. “When are you moving in?”

“Once the interior is completed. The smell of plaster isn’t gone yet, and the furniture I ordered from Italy will come in 10 days. Are you unhappy because our time living together will soon be over? Shall I not go?”

“No?”

‘Please go quickly.’

Jishuka’s aggressive behavior of clinging to him every time she spoke was both enjoyable and burdensome. He knew that South American beauties were supposed to be enthusiastic, but it was a difficult stimulus every morning.

“Your body is getting better every year. Grid, you are really steady.”

Youngwoo reflexively covered his body with the blanket. Jishuka smiled brightly at his unexpectedly chaste

behavior. Her long fingers poked Youngwoo's hard biceps and chest.

"..." Youngwoo couldn't stop Jishuka. He enjoyed the pleasant sensation while admiring her tan skin glistening under the sunlight coming through the window.

"What are you doing in the morning?" Sehee suddenly appeared in an apron and glared at Jishuka and Youngwoo. She showed a heartfelt disgust toward her brother. "Yura unni is pitiful. Shouldn't you give a clear answer to Yura unni before playing around?"

"No, you are misunderstanding..."

"Quickly get dressed and eat, playboy."

The door banged shut.

...He was a playboy who hadn't even kissed anyone yet.

Youngwoo quietly rose from his bed while Jishuka was humming happily.

“I am honestly nervous.”

‘Let’s no longer cling to first in the overall rankings. Don’t be obsessed with it.’

Chris became determined after seeing Grid’s level-up speed and was happy for a while. He felt liberated from the pressure to maintain his first-place ranking. It made hunting, which had seemed like labor, feel fun again. Now, a new worry made him uneasy. The problem was Rose, one of Yatan’s Servants.

“Rose isn’t an easy opponent. I think it’s better not to provoke her more than necessary.”

He wasn’t talking about her individual power. No matter how strong Rose was, she couldn’t overpower the top rankers of the Overgeared members. Of course, it would be a problem if she aimed for the non-combatants of the

Overgeared Guild, but they would be thoroughly prepared for that.

Then what about the Yatan Church behind her? There was no need to worry too much about the Yatan Church either. Since the Yatan invasion, the Rebecca Church had been stepping up efforts to punish the Yatan Church. Currently, the Yatan Church didn't have the capacity to deal with a country.

Lauel had negotiated with Rose because she knew this fact and couldn't ask for cooperation with the Yatan Church in this incident. That's right, but there was a separate problem. It was the summoning of a great demon.

“Rose already has a history of summoning a great demon. It wouldn't be strange for her to summon a great demon again. She has a grudge against us, and the damage will be disastrous if she summons a great demon in the Overgeared Kingdom.”

The main project of the Yatan Church was summoning the great demons. The emergence of a new great demon was a scheduled thing.

The listening Lael shook his head. “It is impossible to summon a great demon in the Overgeared Kingdom. One of the conditions needed to summon a great demon is a large number of human lives, and it is practically impossible to pay with such a large number of human sacrifices in our kingdom. Our security isn’t lacking in comparison to that of the empire.”

After the founding of the Overgeared Kingdom, the guild had been more concerned about security than anything else. The Overgeared members took turns patrolling the territories of the kingdom because they were overly concerned about security. This was the result of Grid’s strong tendencies to take care of the NPCs. This didn’t give any room for summoning the great demon.

“The emergence of a new great demon is likely to be in the kingdom with the lowest security. Additionally, a

great demon at the level of Belial can't be controlled by Yatan's Servants. Rose can't deliberately send the summoned great demon to invade the Overgeared Kingdom."

Yes, the possibility of direct damage from a great demon was very low at this point. Lael reached out to Rose because he had detected this.

"We have to wait for the great demon to be summoned. No matter where it is summoned on the continent, we will be the first to challenge and gain the rewards from the raid."

"I see..."Chris' expression brightened. His anxiety turned into anticipation, and he put on a subtle smile.

Then Lael asked something he had been wondering about, "Did you see Grid's video?"

"The video shot in the tent stall? Of course, I saw it."

"Chris, what do you think? Grid's ability has evolved

noticeably since the Battlefield.”

“You saw it properly. It seems the demon king subjugation was a catalyst for growth.”

The video had become a hot topic over the course of a day. Chris was very impressed when he saw Grid overpower four men easily. Grid had scanned the shoulders and feet of the four people while talking to the stall owner. He had predicted their movements through careful observations and looked for gaps in their breathing as they spoke. Thus, he managed to overpower four of them in an instant.

“The experience of fighting alone against a number of rankers has strengthened his combat ability.”

Chris and the other high rankers already knew from experience that accumulated combat experience in Satisfy also affected reality. Now Grid was becoming a master in reality. He had been polishing his techniques for more than 10 years, and the concept grew in reality.

“This is good news.” Lauel grew more relaxed upon hearing Chris’ reply.

It was an optimistic thing that Grid had the power to defend himself.

[Your execution day has been decided.]

[Four days from now, you will be executed in the capital city of the Glaucian Kingdom.]

[Your sins are the murders of seven craftsmen. After the execution, your level will be reduced by four and your highest level skill will be reduced by one level.]

[After being executed, you will be freed from the identity of the sinner and liberated from all types of constraints. However, your affinity won’t be restored with the seven kingdoms that are hostile to you.]

[You must remain logged in for at least four hours a day

while in jail. If this condition isn't met, the punishment will increase.]

Agnus had already been trapped in the damp dungeon for three days. However, he had to stay here for four more days. Isolation for one week—this alone was fatal damage to a ranker. Agnus would suffer a very great loss from the execution. It would be wasting a few months worth of effort.

Nevertheless, Agnus didn't blame anyone. This was nothing compared to the nightmarish life he had suffered. False accusations? No. This was a deserved punishment. He was being punished for harming many people in the hopes of never being weak again. If he refused this, he was afraid that even his old lover would come to hate him.

That's right. Agnus conscience was based on his love for his old lover, Luina Caroline. For him, Luna was everything.

[Someone has requested a visit, but the Glaucian Kingdom has rejected it.]

Jail was a space where all communications, including whispers and exchanges like mail, were blocked. There was no way to know who requested to visit him. Even so, Agnus was reminded of a girl. It was Euphemina. She was a funny little girl who had been meddling in his business since the Murray Kingdom. Euphemina was the only one who would ask to visit him...

“...No, it can't be. Kukukuk.”

It was probably one of the high rankers who had been one of his victims. They came to laugh at his miserable self and would feel relieved when they saw him being punished.

“ ... ”

Agnus had no allies. It had been like this from the beginning. The time when Luna stood beside him had

been short but very special. Yes, he was alone. It was nothing new.

[There are three days left until your execution.]

One day passed.

[There are two days left until your execution.]

A few days later...

[There is one day left until your execution.]

The last day passed.

[The morning of your execution has dawned.]

Finally, the day arrived. Agnus completed the daily access time restrictions, locking himself in the dark and cold jail. The pain was a gratifying means of forgetting his longing for his old lover.

“Come out.” The jailers dragged Agnus’ skinny body

roughly. Agnus' body was in chains and handcuffs, and he was unable to move properly. He was pushed by the guards' wicked hands, and his face was stuck in the dirt. The guards started laughing.

“KIkik.” Agnus laughed along with them. It was funny because the things he experienced after becoming a criminal were no different from his weak past. Weakness was sin. It was the greatest sin in the world.

“Agnus is being escorted!!”

Agnus was trapped in a carriage with metal bars. He was pulled to the square and could see that many people were gathered—the best and the worst ranked players. It would be strange if the execution of Agnus, one of the world's most famous rankers, wasn't a hot topic. Countless people visited the Glaucian Kingdom, including a large number of media reporters and private broadcasters. Through the thick iron bars, Agnus saw the laughing faces of the people.

Agnus, who had been maintaining his madness under the guise of composure, started to tremble. The eyes of tens of thousands of people stimulated the trauma in his deepest mind. At this moment, Agnus became weak. He stood alone among those who laughed and trampled on him.

“Oof...!” Feeling panicky, Agnus started retching. He wanted to escape from here. However, he couldn’t escape. The handcuffs and chains holding him were taking away all his strength and courage.

‘Agnus, remember. You aren’t alone. I’m there for you. Have courage,’ he thought about Luna’s words.

In the midst of the panic, he tried to feel Luna’s presence. His trembling gaze was looking for Luna. However, as always, he didn’t find her.

‘I’m sorry. I can’t forgive myself for getting dirtied in front of you. I’m sorry. I’m really sorry,’ the last words she told him entered his mind.

It was a testament he couldn't forget, no matter how much he wanted to. Agnus was soon placed on the guillotine. He was forced to kneel. His trembling gaze was filled with tangled green hair.

‘I like your hair. It is a pretty green like the forest. Agnus, do you know? To these children, you are a forest. If it hadn't been for you, these children would've died lonely by now. I like your kindness. Without the forest, neither humanity nor the world can exist, just as I can't exist without you.’

One morning that was no different from usual, Luna had come to his side and told him these words when he was feeding the abandoned dogs. Why did he remember that day? Agnus' eyes became red and his veins bulged.

“I...!” Agnus shouted. He barely managed to speak the truth that no one would believe. “I didn't kill them...!”

It was a cry for Luna. He prayed that she wouldn't be disappointed in him. In the end, his cry reached the

demon, not Luna who wasn't present in this world.

[The 1st Great Demon Baal is speaking with a smile.]

-Get rid of your resentment.

[Baal wants to give you a chance. The quest you rejected will be regenerated.]

[Massacre (1)]

[Difficulty: Class quest.

1st Great Demon Baal wants human souls. Slaughter humans and give their souls to Baal.

★ Quest Acceptance Reward: Freedom from all the curses you are currently under.

Quest Clear Conditions: Kill 1,000 players (0/1000)

Quest Clear Reward: 200,000 demonic power. Quest linked to Massacre (2).]

[Would you like to accept the quest?]

“ ... ”

Before answering, Agnus once again looked at the people. They were still laughing. Some people enjoyed Agnus' misfortune while others ridiculed his words. Among them were those who hadn't been harmed by Agnus. They were the so-called underdogs. Agnus felt something breaking in his head. Uncontrollable rage soared, and his sense of reason fell into a deep swamp. It was at this moment that...

“That's right! He didn't kill anyone!” A blonde girl shouted as she came forward. “The Yatan Church framed him. I have a witness. The seven kingdoms should listen to the arguments first and make a fair judgment about his execution.”

A young girl presented a Yatan Church member as a witness. She was Euphemina. Agnus' expression, which had been distorted like a demon's, instantly blanked.

Chapter 990

“Euphemina!”

“Why is Euphemina defending Agnus?”

“Agnus was framed? Really?”

The tens of thousands of people gathered in the square, who were enjoying Agnus’ appearance, turned their attention to Euphemina. Meanwhile, the observers of the seven kingdoms cocked their heads.

“The Yatan Church is the real culprit?”

“What is this girl’s identity?”

The hunter who met Euphemina the other day explained to the observers, “She is Earl Euphemina of the Overgeared Kingdom.”

“The Overgeared Kingdom...?”

“Hrmm...”

The observers, who were sitting in a relaxed manner on the podium behind the guillotine, showed a lukewarm response. Most of them were antagonistic to the Overgeared Kingdom. First of all, they found the birth of the Overgeared Kingdom unacceptable. The Overgeared Kingdom had overthrown the existing royal family. They were a symbol of rebellion that had broken down the power system which all the nobles on the continent were desperately defending. Just like the royal family, the nobles had a sense of rejection directed toward the Overgeared Kingdom.

Moreover, at the founding ceremony of the Overgeared Kingdom, most of the kingdoms had been defeated. In particular, a baron of the Violet Kingdom had been killed by a soldier of the Overgeared Kingdom, so Violet Kingdom was hostile to the Overgeared Kingdom. Moreover, it had been a long time since the Gauss Kingdom and Overgeared Kingdom had become enemies. As expected, there was a strong response.

“It is rude to disturb an execution held by other nations! A kingdom of uncivilized birth that doesn’t even know the basic laws...!”

“Look at her standing up for a killer. I’m getting goosebumps. The Overgeared Kingdom was built by a rebellion, so they are generous enough to forgive murder?”

Earl Chuck and Earl Dolce had visited the Glaucian Kingdom as observers of the execution. They represented the Gauss and Violet Kingdoms and condemned the Overgeared Kingdom. They didn’t care about the truth that Euphemina offered. The observers of the other kingdoms didn’t speak up, but their reactions were similar. They didn’t pay attention to the Yatan follower in Euphemina’s hands and clicked their tongues.

The important thing for them was to comfort the anxiety and anger of the people, not reveal the truth. The criminal had to be punished. It was impossible to get rid of the people’s anger and anxiety if the Yatan Church was

the culprit. In other words, they didn't want to admit that Euphemina's claim about the Yatan Church was the truth. It was annoying. They didn't feel the need to drag out the problem when it could be simply solved with the execution of Agnus who was already caught.

"I will say it once again," Euphemina spoke up and received everyone's attention. She didn't show any agitation toward the accusations and ridicule of the two earls. The conditional strongest... Her will was solid now that had she inherited Mumud's magic.

"Agnus is a wrongfully framed person. The real culprit who harmed the craftsmen of the seven kingdoms is the Yatan Church," Euphemina asserted. Then she ordered the Yatan follower standing by her side, "Reveal the truth."

"I understand," the Yatan member complied passively. Euphemina didn't know it, but the blank-looking Yatan follower was obedient because he was possessed by Rose. "Her words are right. We murdered the seven craftsmen

and blamed it on Agnus.”

“Why?”

“Agnus betrayed the Yatan Church. We no longer tolerate traitors,” the unimpressed Rose borrowed the body of the Yatan follower and spoke the truth.

She wanted to finish this job as soon as possible. Rose was anxious because her body was left in sleep mode after using the Possession skill. She might’ve hidden it in a safe place, but she didn’t want to leave her body for long.

“How can I believe that?” Beoris, the most prominent figure among the observers of the seven kingdoms and the earl of the Glaucian Kingdom, asked.

‘Tsk, they’re too picky.’ Euphemina clicked her tongue and presented the evidence. The evidence was the Yatan follower himself. Euphemina took off the follower’s robe and clearly revealed the red horseshoe-shaped tattoo on

the follower's forehead. This was a tattoo symbolizing a priest who served in the most notorious Yatan Church. It was impossible to reproduce falsely because it was engraved with the magic power of the priest.

“This...!” Earl Beoris and the observer of the Ark Kingdom covered their faces. They felt that things had become complicated at the presence of an undeniable witness. On the other hand, the remaining five observers covered the sky with their hands, not their faces.

“There isn't enough evidence. The Yatan Church can't be determined as the true criminal just because of one testimony. Thus, we will continue with this criminal's execution.”

“...?”

It was an absurd verdict. The people gathered in the square were shocked. The funny thing was that most of them were delighted. They were obviously hoping for Agnus' execution. Were they people who suffered direct

or indirect damage because of Agnus? No. Agnus was just one person. It didn't make sense for him to create tens of thousands of victims alone.

The public just hoped for someone else's frustration. The breaking of someone better than themselves was a benefit to potential competitors, and even those who weren't competitors enjoyed the sight. It might be different if Agnus was a good person, but they couldn't be bothered by the misfortunes of the wicked.

“Quickly cut off his head!”

“Agnus deserves to die!”

Someone's shout became the spark. Many people started to cry out for Agnus' execution.

“Kill Agnus!”

“Kill Agnus!”

“Kill Agnus!”

“Kukuk.”

As expected, humans never changed. The innate nature of humans was ‘evil.’ It was a terrible nature that couldn’t be suppressed by learning.

‘That’s why I—’ Agnus stared at the quest window still floating before him. ‘I will become a greater evil.’

It was the only way to live in this crazy world. He had to be crazier than others.

[The quest has been accepted.]

[All restrictions have been lifted with the power of Great Demon Baal.]

[Your stats have been restored to the normal value.]

[All skills are now available.]

“Kukuk...! Kuhaha...hat?”

The weight of the handcuffs and chains restraining his hands and feet felt light and weak. It was a level where he could break free right now. However, Agnus remained still. A man was reflected in his golden eyes—Bullet. The poor scapegoat who had been tricked by Veradin into joining Immortal and used for years—the idiot jumped out and stood beside Euphemina.

He shouted toward the mad public, “Do you have ears? Agnus isn’t the killer!! You said it yourself earlier!”

Bullet didn’t mention the witness that Euphemina brought. Why did he need to mention it? Agnus himself said he wasn’t the killer.

‘A stupid fool to the end.’ Agnus read Bullet’s trust and bit his lips. ‘Why trust me? I don’t understand. I am a wicked being. I’m not entitled to receive anyone’s trust. I am alone. I have to be alone. So why are they...’

Something rose in the depths of Agnus’ heart. It was a certain emotion, and it was hard to explain. The feeling

was so unfamiliar that he didn't even remember it anymore.

“You dumb bastard! Who are you?”

“I am a necromancer of the Overgeared Kingdom!”

“Overgeared Kingdom...! The Overgeared Kingdom must be determined to be hostile to our seven kingdoms! We won't overlook it anymore!”

The observers could no longer suppress their anger. Killing intent filled their eyes as they ordered the hunters, “They are the ones interfering with the execution! Capture them right now!”

The hunters didn't delay it any longer. They jumped off the podium and ran toward Euphemina and Bullet. It was at this moment that...

“Kuuack! Kuaaaaah!”

“...?”

It was a chaotic scene. The hundreds of thousands of players recording the scene instantly turned their attention to Agnus. He was screaming despite still being restrained at the guillotine. His bloodshot eyes appeared on the monitors for the global viewers watching the situation.

“...!”

Simultaneously, the audience got goosebumps. It was because they saw the madness in Agnus’ eyes.

“What?!” The observers were astonished as the handcuffs and chains holding Agnus snapped. The excited masses shrank back. The executioner’s head exploded. As soon as he fell down, he became a skeleton soldier and rose again.

“H-Hik...!” People trembled in fear as they felt the power of the world’s strongest necromancer. On the other hand, the hunters didn’t shake. They would deal with Agnus after first overpowering Euphemina and Bullet. They

considered Agnus a prey that was easy to deal with. A laugh rang out behind them as they rushed toward Euphemina and Bullet.

“Kahahahat! Get lost!” The death knight and Agnus stuck together and swung their swords. The confused hunters spread out, but Lich Mumud’s magic hit them like their actions had been expected. They all felt at the same time.

“Keok...! Cough cough!”

“Was he this strong?”

The number of hunters dispatched by the seven kingdoms to hunt Agnus had been immeasurable. The hunters currently present were those who captured Agnus in the Overgeared Kingdom, and they had dealt with Agnus who had weakened after killing numerous hunters. As such, they were unfamiliar with the Agnus who had fully regained his strength.

“Dammit!” The hunters collapsed from the unexpected

surprise and then rose immediately. They set their top priority as Agnus and stopped moving against Bullet and Euphemina. Agnus ignored the hunters and started attacking Euphemina and Bullet. “You guys, I’ll kill you.”

“A-Agnus?”

“Dieeee!”

“...!?”

Euphemina and Bullet hadn’t expected to be attacked by Agnus and were hit. Their stomachs were stabbed and they staggered back. Bullet shouted, “We’re here to help you!”

“Shut up! Shut upppp! Kihat! Kuahahahat!”

“...!”

Conversation didn’t work. Agnus, his death knight, and lich were completely dominated by insanity, and they persistently went after Euphemina and Agnus. The sharp

swordsmanship spread out like a spider web while destructive magic rained down. Dozens of players in the vicinity of Euphemina and Bullet couldn't cope with the fierce bombardment and died. The only clue to clear Agnus' name fell down and was resurrected as a skeleton soldier.

Agnus was relentless. He ignored the surroundings and sincerely tried to harm Euphemina and Bullet. Was Agnus really a madman?

"You..."The confused Euphemina defended against Agnus' offensive, only to stiffen like a stone statue. It was due to Agnus' expression that was distorted by pain. He made an expression like his heart was being torn apart every time he damaged Bullet and Euphemina.

'...He is a terrible actor.'Euphemina noticed Agnus' intentions. Agnus was attempting to cut the connection between himself and the Overgeared Kingdom, to avoid them becoming hostile to the seven kingdoms. That's right. This guy was trying to be alone again.

Euphemina shouted to Bullet, “Let’s leave.”

“Huh? What about Agnus?”

Lauel was mindful of the possibility that the seven kingdoms would ignore the testimony of the Yatan follower. So, he asked Pope Damian to cooperate as a means of changing the flow of judgment. In a moment, Damian would arrive here and clear Agnus of the charges.

Then what on earth was this? Things had completely gone wrong. Agnus had descended from the guillotine himself and made his position more disadvantageous. Rather than helping himself, Agnus only made the situation worse. As Agnus’ sword struck Bullet’s chest, the death knight that Bullet automatically summoned protected him. Agnus’ death knight blew away Bullet’s death knight. Then Agnus’ sword aimed at Bullet’s neck.

“Agnus...”

“Die. Kukuk.”

Agnus opened his mouth to say something when his sword stabbed Bullet. Of course, Agnus couldn't kill Bullet because his strength stat was relatively low. However, Bullet collapsed in place like a broken doll. It was from mental trauma, not physical pain. Like Immortal's downfall, he was once again ignored by Agnus, and his heart felt like it was being torn apart.

“ ... ”

Agnus looked away from Bullet. He laughed as he confronted the hunters and hundreds of soldiers alone. “All of you... You have one life? Kik, kikik!”

“ ...! ”

The hunters, the soldiers and even the observers on the platform shuddered. They felt the ridiculous intuition that they would surely be killed by Agnus one day. The square became a battleground. The insane killer and the

skeleton army he led randomly slaughtered people without caring if they were NPCs or players. Now he had undeniably become a true murderer.

-We have shown our favor to Agnus and have sufficiently achieved our purpose. Don't get involved anymore and return to the Overgeared Kingdom, Lael's voice entered the ears of Euphemina and Bullet. Lael was very pleased with this situation.

Chapter 991

‘Poor little lamb (Agnus).’

From a mansion near the square, Lael took advantage of the chaos and quickly sneaked into the square to watch. Lael was happy and pleased because Agnus had shown the ideal response. He lost control over his reason and entrusted himself to madness, cutting off his connection with the Overgeared Kingdom by attacking Euphemina and Bullet. Agnus also declared that he would be hostile to the people (players) in the square and the seven kingdoms. He would slaughter all of them, even if he died a hundred times in the process. Refusing the hand of salvation held out by the Overgeared Kingdom, he was reborn as the strongest disaster to the potential enemies of the Overgeared Kingdom.

‘His level of quality is next to Grid and Faker.’

Lael smiled and sent a whisper of retreat to Euphemina and Bullet. Bullet wanted to convince Agnus a bit more,

but Lael pretended not to know. Everything he did was for the Overgeared Kingdom, and Lael was willing to trample on the thoughts of others. To others, Lael might be a villain. The concept of conscience was extravagant for him, who carried tens of millions of lives on his back.

“...It’s a hard life,” Lael said quietly as he became full of emotion. He mourned for the crushed Agnus and recalled the first time he met Grid.

‘Leave everything to me. You just have to do what you want.’

Lael didn’t forget that Grid had reached this point because of Lael’s oath at the time. Even if someone pointed a finger at him... Even if someone shed tears of blood because of him...

‘I’m just doing my best for Grid and the Overgeared Kingdom.’

『Agnus' evil deed of indiscriminately slaughtering players is starting to emerge. Agnus will be more isolated in the wake of yesterday's incident...』This was playing on the TV.

[(Column) The one-sided courtship of the Overgeared Guild.]

[Were they nervous that the truce with the empire is coming to an end?

The Overgeared Guild tried to get Agnus to join them. The method they chose was the predictable and common cliché of salvation. Just before Agnus was executed by the guillotine, Euphemina emerged like a hero and claimed that Agnus was falsely accused.

It was a terrible failure. The observers ignored the witness testimony Euphemina presented. Then Agnus broke free of his shackles and attacked Euphemina. Like a toothless lion who is starving to death yet doesn't want to drink another animal's milk, Agnus poured out magic

toward the Overgeared Guild's useless salvation. The raging beast ran wild for over an hour...]

Stories about Agnus were everywhere in the newspaper.

“Crazy bastard!”

It was early in the morning. Youngwoo returned from his jog and crumpled up the newspaper after reading it. He wasn't angry that the Overgeared Guild was embarrassed. Rather, he was furious that his colleagues' kindness and thoughts had been trampled on.

“That son of a bitch dares to attack Euphemina...! Bullet!”

Euphemina had wandered all over the continent in order to copy skills. She was forced to waste time because of her class characteristics. Still, Youngwoo had been considerate toward her and had not taken away her time even though she was one of the strongest powers of the guild. This precious power had gone to the distant

Glaucian Kingdom to help Agnus. Yet Agnus refused her help and even attacked her. He even trampled on Bullet, his former colleague. Agnus' attacks and the baffled expressions on Euphemina's and Bullet's faces couldn't be erased from Youngwoo's mind. Youngwoo couldn't forgive Agnus for ignoring their favor.

“Why is he really living like that?”

Youngwoo had hated Agnus since the first moment they met. Every time he heard and saw Agnus' speech and behavior which were distorted by a lack of self-esteem, Youngwoo felt frustrated and angry.

‘He is worse than the old me!’

It was a baseless confidence! Youngwoo showered in cold water to calm his mind and then immediately logged into Satisfy. He had a mountain of work to do today.

The crazy combat power of a madman...

The video of Agnus fighting alone in the midst of enemy territory became a hot topic. First, the scene was impressive. Agnus blew away the executioner with magic and turned him into a skeleton soldier. Then he flew forward while blocking dozens of arrows with the skeleton soldiers. Everything was perfect, from the speed at which he summoned the undead to his insight and ability to control the undead.

During the one hour battle, Agnus killed his enemies, made them into shields, and swung them as weapons, leading to his advantage. It was the ultimate area that necromancers pursued. Agnus had already reached it.

“Controlling dozens of undead like that. I wonder if it is possible for a human. Even Kraugel had a hard time controlling a few swords...”

“I agree. I couldn’t believe it when I saw it. His concentration must be enormous since he maintained the best judgment throughout the battle.”

“Isn’t it like the Savant Syndrome? You know, a genius who is born with impaired brain function.”

“Oh? That sounds quite plausible?”

“By the way, isn’t it known that the higher the dominance stat, the more undead that can be controlled? Then will Agnus become much stronger in the future?”

“Maybe he can grow on par with Grid...”

The members of the Overgeared Guild were gathered and talking about Agnus in a common room on the first floor of the palace. They admired Agnus’ skill that was different from ordinary people. Grid was very unhappy when he walked through the corridor and overheard their conversation.

‘What’s so great about him?’

Then Toban’s voice rang out, “No matter how great Agnus is, he can’t compare to Grid. Grid can kill his

enemies in one blow. It is frustrating to see Agnus fighting while summoning skeletons.”

“To tell the truth... Grid will sweep them up in one blow, no matter how many undead Agnus has.”

“Huhuhut.”

That’s it. Grid was much better than Agnus.

...No matter what kingdom, it would be impossible to wipe out Agnus’ undead army in one blow.

‘Well, whatever.’ Grid was in a good mood after hearing his colleagues’ conversation. He hummed as he moved toward the smithy.

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

Grid hunted while occasionally returning to Reinhardt. Normally, there was no need to explain why he returned

from the hunt. Whenever he hunted, items such as potions would reduce in number or the durability of his items would fall. Thus, it was necessary to return to a village.

This time though, Grid returned for a special reason. Thanks to his blood-sucking ability and his pets, he could hunt without potions. He could also repair his items himself, meaning he had returned for another reason. It was to repair someone else's item. That item was naturally...the helmet with ether. It was the 'eye' of the evil eyes' king.

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

Grid hammered with all his heart while a little boy crouched beside him. The cute little boy spoke with closed eyes, "My only king, who has captivated my heart with the generosity of the universe... I can't raise my head every time I trouble you." Very few people could stay beside the Overgeared King while he was absorbed in his work. Grid wasn't aware of it himself, but even the

Overgeared members didn't come near him when he was concentrating.

In other words, the little boy sitting next to Grid was either a very special person or an idiot who didn't notice such things. This time, it was the former.

“You don't need to be burdened. I'm sorry that I'm not a greater help to you.”

The identity of the child was the evil eyes' king. He was the owner of the evil eyes who only at least a legend can afford. No one could deal with the evil eyes' king easily, just like they couldn't deal with Grid easily. Ordinary people couldn't imagine that the world-class talents would be sitting next to each other in a smithy.

“My king, do you remember?” The cute evil eyes' king tried to speak solemnly. When he heard the voice of the evil eyes' king which was more serious than usual, Grid raised his head. “What?”

“I have the ability to plant an evil eye in others.”

“...!”

It finally came! Grid thought of the first day he met the evil eyes' king. The king said he had the ability to implant an evil eye in others. These words had aroused Grid's blind goodwill.

That's right. It was why Grid did his best for the evil eyes' king. Grid sought the power of the evil eye, so he tried to attain maximum affinity with the evil eyes' king. Finally, the time had come.

“I-I remember. Why? Do you want to implant an evil eye in me?”

“I have been thinking about it since the day I pledged to serve you. However, you know that the evil eye is also a curse.”

“ ... ”

It was why Grid didn't cling to the evil eye heavily. A curse...

Yes, the evil eye's power to exercise its ability by simply looking at the target could be dangerous.

"The faces of your loved ones can't be seen with both eyes. You might unintentionally harm your colleagues. One eye must always be sealed. I can't bear to plant an evil eye when it will give you loneliness and discomfort."

The king had been suffering his whole life because of his evil eyes. He didn't want to burden Grid with an evil eye. Even so, he brought up the story of the evil eyes because it was the only thing he could do for Grid. It was true that the evil eye was powerful even if it was a curse.

"Um..." Grid thought carefully. He didn't make a hasty decision, just like when he agonized over whether it was right to consume two slots of the creation skill for the Overgeared Skeletons. After a long time, Grid handed the repaired ether helmet to the evil eyes' king and asked,

“How many types of evil eyes are there? Can I choose the evil eye I want?”

There were evil eyes that froze the target they looked at and those that didn't deal physical damage and caused obedience. If Grid could choose an evil eye, the risk of the transplant would be greatly reduced. The evil eyes' king replied, “I don't even know how many types of evil eyes there are. Additionally, the evil eye is a force closely related to the nature of the person it is implanted in. Thus, it is pointless to instill a certain evil eye in you. You will be reborn with a power suitable for you once the evil eye is assimilated with you.”

In other words—

‘It's random?’

Grid's headache became more painful. He thought it would be dangerous to have an evil eye when there wasn't any ether to be used.

“If I’m unlucky, I might have to wear an eyepatch all the time...”

Grid had long favored the Slaughterer’s Eye Patch. He was aware of the inconvenience of having one side of his vision covered...

‘...Wait, there’s none?’

[Slaughterer’s Eye Patch]

[Rating: Unique

Durability: 7/7

* The skill ‘Vital Spot Detection’ will be generated.

The Slaughterer was tortured for a long time. He was also forced to watch the torture of countless people.

As a result, he has a high grasp of the vital spots.

This eyepatch has been used by the Slaughterer for a long

time and gained this ability.

Conditions of Use: None.

Weight: 0.1]

The Slaughterer's Eye Patch was a special artifact. There was nothing about 'interfering with vision' in the description and only had the hint of 'seeing the vital spots.' The Slaughterer's Eye Patch didn't interfere with his vision. This meant there was no discomfort wearing it. There was no reason to hesitate to transplant the evil eye.

Grabbing the evil eyes' king, Grid shouted, "Give me the evil eye!"

He believed in his good luck stat. Grid expected that he could get an evil eye without significant risk and the performance would be excellent.

Chapter 992

“You chose your own destiny. Okay. If this is Your Majesty’s will, I won’t stop you. My king, I—
Poriorderporonopitonojiodebe—will implant an evil eye in you.”

Why was it that ‘Evil Eyes’ King’ floating on top of the king’s head instead of his real name? Grid had been secretly wondering, and now he knew why.

‘Is there a character limit?’

It was also difficult to remember. Let’s assume he didn’t hear the real name. “Please implant it in my left eye.”

“I understand. Don’t let the weight of your new destiny crush your soul.”

It happened while Grid’s hands and feet were curling up, cringing at the line. The evil eyes king covered Grid’s left eye with his small hand.

‘What type of evil eye will it be?’

Grid’s heart thumped. Believing in his good luck, Grid was 80% expectant and 20% anxious. He hoped that the evil eye would be the best one for him.

[The evil eyes king has used his power!]

[The evil eyes king will try to transplant an evil eye into you!]

[The system will analyze your game history and patterns. The current progress is 3%, 4%, 7%, 11%...]

‘The evil eye’s ability is closely related to the nature of the person it is being transplanted into...?’

The system seemed to grasp the player’s tendencies based on an analysis of their history and patterns before giving them the evil eye that best suited them.

‘It is a very good sign.’ Grid was a legendary blacksmith who made more than 700 types of items and had a lot of

combat experience. The evil eye given to him couldn't be ordinary. 'I will obviously get the best one.'

Grid's expectations grew even greater. However, it was only for a moment.

[The current progress is 39%.]

'...Wait.'

Grid's expectations, which had soared to 90%, fell to the depths of hell. Looking back at old memories, he realized there were too many wrongs related to his 'deeds.' In particular, the early days before he became Pagma's Descendant were a problem. Eating, acting, fraud, arson, violence, deception, cursing, and so on—the evil deeds he had committed during his immature days almost exceeded the capacity of his brain.

'I have committed too many wrongs...!'

The most disturbing part was the massive amount of

swearing directed toward the operators. If he listed all the profanity in print, it could fill 1,000 pages. It seemed to go beyond two volumes of books.

‘D-Don’t tell me there is something like a swearing eye?’

Dammit! What if he had to swear every time he used a skill? Would he have to shout it out? Just imagining it was terrible.

‘Still, the performance should be good.’

In his prime, Grid was a master of swearing who was even greater than Huroi. After all, Huroi used irony to ask about the parents of others, but Grid was different. It was possible for him to spit out a limitless amount of curses without being exhausted. If Grid had a swearing eye, the enemy’s mentality would quickly be devastated.

‘However, it is a bit wrong.’

No matter how good the performance, it was counterproductive if it ruined his image. It would have

an adverse effect on the Overgeared Guild and Overgeared Kingdom if he obtained this type of evil eye.

‘I can’t get the swearing eye.’

[The current progress is 54%...]

Was it because his gameplay duration was too long? Or were there too many incidents in the game? The system’s analysis of Grid’s history and patterns was slower than expected. Despite this, Grid thought it was a good thing. He was able to calm his mind during this time.

‘As the saying goes, imagination can become reality. Let’s think positively, think positively.’

Grid had a close relationship with fire. He was always using fire when producing tens of thousands of items. It would be good if he got something like an ignition eye.

‘Pagma was said to be the Duke of Fire, and I am qualified as his descendant... Ugh.’ Grid stopped

thinking and closed his eyes for a moment.

As the progress of the analysis exceeded 80%, a large number of notification windows started to emerge.

[Currently trying to grasp your essence based on your history and patterns but there are too many conflicting intentions.]

[Since it is judged that your essence can't be determined with just history and patterns, an algorithm will guess your goals and desires.]

[You have too many goals and desires!]

[You aren't suitable for many evil eyes!]

[The current progress is 95%... 100%.]

[It is concluded that you can't be defined.]

[Potential system error. Your achievements needed to be reviewed in detail for reconfirmation. Understanding the

type, contents, and process of your achievements.]

[You have too many achievements!]

[Morpheus' main server needs to intervene to properly analyze you and decide what evil eye to implant in you.]

The evil eye was a force closely related to 'essence.' Due to its nature, Grid had to face the contents of terribly realistic notification windows.

‘What supercomputer can’t properly analyze the data of one player?’

It was such a ridiculous development that he was speechless! A new notification popped up as Grid was clicking his tongue.

[Completed the search for the evil eye closest to your essence.]

“...!” It was finally here. Grid was nervous. Then small sparks appeared around his left eye. The colour of the

iris turned red. The shadows seemed to split in half around the small point of the pupil.

“Heok! T-This eye...!”

As Grid’s eye was changing, the evil eyes’ king grasped the identity of the evil eye and was astonished. Grid was also astonished.

[The evil eye transplant is successful!]

[You have obtained the castration eye due to your selfish greed!]

“Is this a joke?!”

Castration? Was this a 19+ game? Grid felt an instinctive reluctance and fear. He was so upset that he forgot to wear an eyepatch. Grid wanted to be sick. The fact that he could castrate the evil eyes’ king in front of him gave him goosebumps.

“I won’t allow your comfort.”

Grid was hurriedly putting on the eyepatch only to harden like ice. He was greatly embarrassed about the phrase spoken when the evil eye was activated, only to realize the evil eye didn't affect the king.

‘It is impossible to damage the king of the evil eyes with an evil eye?’

Or was it that ‘castration’ wasn't actually castration? As the evil eyes' king looked confused, Grid sighed with relief and checked the detailed information of the castration eye.

[Castration Eye]

[-A type of evil eye.

Blocks some of the beneficial effects of the target watched.

There is a high chance of blocking the beneficial effects of an atrocious target.

However, the target must be within 12 metres.

Resource Consumption: 500 Mana.]

“...!?”

Grid was astonished. It was because he was well aware of the meaning of ‘beneficial effect.’ Beneficial effects were all phenomena related to ‘luck.’ In terms of combat, there was the critical hit rate, the evasion rate, the accuracy rate, the defense rate, resistance, and item acquisition rate. Non-combat related effects were item enhancement success rate, production success rate, hidden piece acquisition rate, quest acquisition rate, and so on.

Those were the only things that came to Grid’s mind right now. All phenomena related to beneficial effects were so diverse that it was difficult to manually mention them.

‘The power to block positive odds...!’

This was a big hit, a great jackpot. It might not have an immediate dramatic effect like weakening or strengthening the target, but it blocked the variables. Additionally, it was possible to ruin a particular target. For example, if a competitor was raiding a boss monster, he just had to watch them to lower their odds of succeeding.

‘Wait. Then will I do a team kill?’

Grid imagined raiding with his teammates only to be called a troll. He thought about it for a long time before his expression distorted.

‘I thought it was great, but the constraints during group activities are too big.’

It was too bad. He didn’t seem to have received the highest-grade evil eye. Grid was complaining when the trembling voice of the king entered his ears.

“I-If you can’t see how great the c-castration eye is...”

“ ... ”

The evil eyes' king was someone who understood the principle of the evil eyes. Grid felt like he was naked in front of the king. He was worried that the evil eyes' king would see his lowly jealousy and be disappointed.

However, there was no need to worry. The evil eyes' king was a demonkin who wasn't hostile to humans. He peeked at Grid's essence and felt great joy. “The demon-like being whom I chose as my king! My king, who is only generous to me! I feel infinite respect and trust in your selfishness and greed!!”

“Y-Yes. It is great.” The praise caused Grid to sweat, and he went on to exit the smithy. He still had some things remaining on his schedule. Damian had tried to help Agnus at Lauel's request but lost his way. Then Grid heard from Lauel that Damian was visiting the Overgeared Kingdom.

Regas applied for a duel with Damian, and the guild chat window was already in an uproar, causing Grid to rush

to the training field. He couldn't miss the opportunity to watch the duel between the top talents.

By the time he arrived, the duel was in full swing.

Damian was wrapped with all types of buffs as his sword cracked the ground. Meanwhile, Regas' splendid combos aimed at Damian's loopholes. The two people smashed against each other in the air before falling apart. Damian fell toward Grid's side.

“I won't allow your comfort.”

“Huh?”

There was one part that Grid overlooked. The trigger of the evil eye was the 'owner of the evil eye looking at the target.' Even if he didn't see the target's eyes, the opponent was seen by the owner of the evil eye. Trying to hide the evil eye with the Slaughterer's Eye Patch meant that nothing was blocking the evil eye's view. Ether was also necessary for Grid.

[The castration eye has been activated.]

[Blocking all beneficial effects of the target!]

[This effect is retained while watching the target.]

“...!?” Grid was embarrassed, and Damian was astounded. Grid realized that his evil eye had blocked Damian’s ‘possibilities’ while Damian made a ghastly expression as he stiffened like a stone statue. Regas’ kick struck the back of Damian’s head like a thunderbolt. It was a rapid attack, but it couldn’t hurt Damian in his full buff state. Regas’ real damage came from the combo damage accumulating.

Then Damian collapsed from Regas’ kicks. He stretched out on the floor like a dead frog.

“...!?” Regas’ legs pierced the air at the unexpected reaction.

‘Is there a trick at this timing?’

Damian just used his buffs, so how could he suddenly be weak? The intentions were obvious, but the acting was perfect. The kicking damage was actually three times greater than expected.

‘Did he instantly release his equipment and lower his defenses? Did he pretend to release his buffs to lower my guard?’ Regas recovered his fist and thought about it as he relaxed his shoulders. Damian was still lying on the floor. He was full of obvious loopholes. Regas could likely win right now if he rushed over and attacked. However, Pope Damian wouldn’t reveal such obvious loopholes.

‘He is inducing my carelessness. The damage will be reversed if I approach him.’

The acting was so blatant that it made him think more deeply. Regas raised his concentration to the maximum while maintaining his distance from Damian. He checked the cooldown of his skills while trying to predict Damian’s next move. This was called shadow boxing. Meanwhile, the Overgeared members didn’t notice the

situation and were still cheering for Regas and Damian. Of course, Grid was among them.

“Damian, what are you doing? Get up and fight!!”

“ ... ”

Grid was cheering for a person after turning him into this state? Damian was upset. He kept lying down like a dead frog and was convinced that he was hated by Grid. In a sense, the pope had greater authority than the king of a nation. He, who was respected by everyone, shed silent tears. Damian was very sad, like a five-year-old child whose mother refused to buy him a toy or a cow that had been castrated. Thinking he was hated by Grid, a huge sorrow and fear filled Damian, making him act as if he had lost the world.

Chapter 993

[All your beneficial effects are blocked!]

[All buffs that are in effect have been turned off!]

Grid emerged outside the battle while wearing an eyepatch. Damian fell into a sense of helplessness as their eyes met. It was a sense that his very existence was denied. Everything was empty. That's right. Buffs were a typical beneficial effect that weren't safe in front of the castration eye. There was the premise that it was subject to 'probability', but the castration eye was clearly one of the best evil eyes.

Grid was shocked after finding out about Damian's situation. 'Wiping out buffs that have already been applied...?'

It wasn't that he didn't think of the correlation between beneficial effects and buffs. He just didn't expect it to delete buffs that were already being applied.

‘Great...’

500 mana was consumed when the evil eye was activated. The Slaughterer’s Eye Patch couldn’t control the evil eye. In fact, Grid was very frustrated because of these two difficulties. Now, this was enough to overcome the disappointment. No, he was excited to realize how lucky he was. Grid shook as he was given a distinct sense of purpose.

‘I should get more Ether Diamonds.’

It was originally a production material. In order to properly use the evil eye, it was better to acquire them. He already knew how to get the Ether Diamonds. The Elliter Mine of Talima was where the Ether Diamonds were sleeping. The reliability of the information was 100% since Kraugel had provided it personally. Grid could go there if he wanted to collect Ether Diamonds. The problem was the fact that it was a forbidden zone.

‘Great demon’s hand...’

It was also the hand of the 12th great demon. According to Kraugel's report, one of the 12th great demon's hands was more powerful than the 33rd Great Demon Belial.

‘I must raid it.’

There was a need to spur his growth. The dragon's blessing, the enlightenment effect, and experience buff potions meant that Grid had raised his level to 389 from hunting, but this was still insufficient. He had to achieve level 399 and gain the 200,000 Great Swordsmanship. Then he had to achieve level 400 and gain the fourth stats awakening. These were the minimum conditions needed for Grid to challenge the mine.

‘I also have to increase the entire power of the Overgeared Guild.’

Grid looked at his colleagues gathered in the training field. One month had passed since the end of the 4th National Competition, but the armed status of his colleagues hadn't changed much.

‘I’ll have to slowly make items one by one. I’ll also get them the evil eye.’

The moment Damian gave up the duel halfway, Lauel’s eyes were shining like a dog in front of a snack. If he had a tail, it would be wagging restlessly.

‘Lauel has already noticed.’

He was truly a smart person. Grid smiled and took off the eyepatch. His red iris and his pupil, which resembled a black sun, were revealed. He blushed as the line reflexively emerged from his mouth, “I won’t allow your comfort.”

[The castration eye is activated.]

[Blocking all beneficial effects of the target!]

[There are too many targets in sight.]

[You have insufficient mana. The evil eye will apply to only a certain few people.]

“Evil eye!”

His colleagues finally became aware of Grid’s new power and were shocked, while Lael cheered. Lael was even in tears.

“The evil eyes’ king! He used the ability to transplant the evil eye?” Lael questioned Grid as he held onto Grid’s armor. He wanted to hear that he was right. His heart was desperate for it.

Fortunately, Grid nodded. “It’s great that you noticed straight away. Yes, you are correct.”

“Indeed...!”

Eyes...! He was finally getting his eyes!Lael was thrilled at learning how to achieve his lifelong desires. He grasped both of Grid’s hands and cried out, “I am living because of you! It is because of your presence that I can be who I am right now!”

“You’re overdoing it,” Grid said and put aside Lauel, who was shedding tears. Then he explained to his colleagues, “Do your best to build up 100% affinity with the evil eyes’ king. Then you will be able to get an evil eye. The concept of the evil eye is...”

Grid didn’t conceal anything. He taught his colleagues about the personality of the evil eyes’ king, his experience of attacking the king’s mind, the process of acquiring the evil eye, and the strengths and weaknesses of the evil eye. There was no distortion at all. Grid’s jealousy only applied to other people or competitors. To his colleagues, Grid was just kind. He didn’t mind even if his colleagues were more talented than him.

“Thank you!”

“Thank you, Grid!”

Lauel listened carefully to Grid’s explanation and embraced him while the others ran to Grid and expressed their affection and gratitude. On the other

hand...

“Damian?”

“ ... ”

Pope Damian just watched one with an awkward expression. Grid approached him, and Damian hurriedly waved both hands.

“I-I don’t intend to intercept Grid’s achievements.”

“Intercept my achievements?”

“The method of how to get an evil eye. I’m not a member of the Overgeared Guild and can’t benefit from Grid’s knowledge.”

“What are you saying? Why are you trying to be alone when you’re our friend and colleague?”

“ ... ”

“Damian, I wish for you to also get an evil eye. However, as mentioned earlier, the Ether Diamond is absolutely necessary to use the evil eye without limitations. Thus, let’s go together when we raid the great demon’s hand. When you’re absent, the difference is as big as the difference between the heavens and the earth.”

“Y-You’re overpraising me.”

“Let’s go to the smithy. Didn’t you receive production materials as rewards for this year’s National Competition? I’ll make a new item for you.”

“ ... ”

“Weapons or armor, which do you like? I heard that the sword you’ve been using these days is very special. Is your armor in a worse state than your weapon?”

“Yes... Yes, that’s right. I think it is better not to replace my weapon.”

Damian's left hand was covered with a bright light. It was a light that was like a flame. He held the light with one hand and pulled at it with the other hand. Then a dazzling white sword with a beautiful appearance was revealed. It was the grandeur of Holy Sword Summoning.

[Player Damian wishes to share the item information with you.]

[Damian's Holy Sword]

[Rating: Epic (Growth)]

Physical Attack Power: 1,450(+175) Magic Attack Power: 1,090(+81)

* Applies 10% of the wearer's strength to the weapon's physical damage.

* Applies 10% of the wearer's intelligence to the weapon's magic damage.

- * 30% reduction in cooldown time of divine attribute skills.
- * 40% reduction in the resource consumption of divine attribute skills.
- * 20% increase in the power of the wearer's swordsmanship skill.
- * 10% increase in attack speed.
- * 30% additional damage to evil beings.
- * There is a low probability of generating a random buff when attacking.
- ★ Can grow to the myth rating.
- ★ The growth rate is very slow.

A sword offered by the heavens to Damian, who has outstanding achievements and has been recognized by the goddess of light. It is a symbol, which is used to

punish evil, that will grow with Damian.

Conditions of Use: Damian.

Weight: 0]

“Wow...” Grid was really impressed. With a weapon summoning skill, the holy sword made of light had infinite potential and contained a unique splendor. It was a weapon that even the legendary blacksmith Grid coveted. No, to be precise, Grid coveted it because it was a weapon. There was the option to add some of the wearer’s stats to the weapon’s performance. It was fantastic for Grid who had a huge amount of stats.

“It starts from the epic rating?”

“No, the rare rating. It just grew to the epic rating yesterday. That’s why I haven’t enhanced it yet.”

“At the rare rating, the stats addition rate was less than 10%?”

“Yes, that’s right. It was 8%.”

“It will go up every time the rating increases... Unlike symbolic weapons like the First Holy Sword, these options are practical and it is a weapon that can be used for life.”

“Really? I’m glad. Since this is Grid’s evaluation, I can use it with confidence.” Damian laughed.

It was the Overgeared King and not someone else who evaluated it as a ‘lifelong weapon.’ Thus, his affection for the sword grew bigger. Grid only felt sorry about one thing.

‘It needs to be at least legendary great to be a lifelong weapon...’

Grid knew better than anyone else about the slow growth rate of growth type items. He couldn’t imagine how slowly Damian’s weapon would grow when it had the option of ‘growth rate is very slow.’ Grid shook his head

and asked Damian, “I’m sorry, can you let me try wearing the sword once?”

Damian’s Holy Sword was summoned using a skill. It was also a sword imbued with Damian’s own magic power and divine power. Would Grid be able to use it? It was the perfect opportunity to experience with his characteristic of being able to ‘wear all items.’

“Yes.”

It was an item that couldn’t be replaced by any treasures in the world. Despite this, Damian didn’t raise any objections or questions about the ridiculous request to borrow it. The holy sword was immediately transferred to Grid.

[Damian’s Holy Sword has been equipped.]

[It is a summoned item based on a skill. If the original owner recovers the skill, you will lose ownership of the item.]

“Ah...” Grid was astounded as he held the holy sword in his hand. He didn’t think he would be able to equip this sword.

‘Pagma was a huge monster.’

He didn’t forget that the characteristics of Pagma’s Descendant originated from Pagma. Grid’s advantages and strengths were naturally from Pagma. As he returned the sword to Damian, Grid was able to keenly realize how great Pagma. He was feeling good because he could correctly identify the fraudulent nature of his class with Damian’s help.

“Tell me the list of required armor. Let’s go straight to the smithy.”

“That... Is it okay? I thought you were busy hunting these days.”

“Do you think I will hesitate to invest a few days in you? It’s fine.”

Just as Damian was always grateful to Grid, Grid also felt grateful toward Damian. He wasn't bothered at all about investing time in Damian.

‘I'm also sorry about the evil eye.’

Damian had felt a huge shock and horror when his buffs were removed by the castration eye. Consequently, Grid wanted to comfort Damian after Damian was forced to give up on the duel because of him. The two people headed to the smithy.

“This and this.” The gold medal rewards that Damian handed over to Grid were the Black Tortoise's Breath and White Tiger's Breath.

Defense was more important than attack power to Damian, so he chose the water and earth attributes.

‘It is good.’

This was an opportunity to strengthen the Black

Tortoise's Breath in advance. Grid smiled as he pulled out the insane dragon hammer and anvil.

“Aaaaack! No affinity! It doesn't rise!”

“A gift doesn't work and a conversation doesn't work. This is a real disaster.”

Raising affinity with the evil eyes' king...! It was a new challenge for the Overgeared members, and it was very tough. Grid had the characteristic of 'easily acknowledged' and he had a high reputation, making it easy for him to communicate with named NPCs.

However, in general, it wasn't actually easy to associate with named NPCs.

Of course, the evil eyes' king was kind to the Overgeared members, but it was tricky because of his chuuni nature and the deep wound in his heart. The number of people who increased their affinity with the king in the past

fortnight was small enough to be counted on one hand.

“Kukukuk... He is a symbol of rebirth, but he isn’t an easy opponent...” Even Lael was unable to gain the affinity of the evil eyes’ king. He only gained one affinity point in the past fortnight. It was the level of a bud. Lael wanted to get the evil eye and be reborn as his ‘true me.’ As he returned from conversing with the evil eyes’ king, Lael sighed deeply.

Then the young knight called Royman came running in. “P-Prime Minister.”

Her real name was Karin. She was disguised as a man and still thought the fact that she was a woman had gone unnoticed. Royman had the title of ‘Rising Star of the West’ and had been reborn as a prospect of the Overgeared Kingdom after studying under Piaro for several years.

“What happened?” Lael was nervous. It was because Royman’s urgent attitude was unusual.

As expected, an amazing report was given, “I-It is a visit from the King of Valhalla.”

“God of War Ares?”

Why was he in a hurry to end the exchange with the Overgeared Kingdom? Lael immediately headed for the parlor. Ares, who was holding a cup in his hand, put it down and waved. “Hey, would you like to form an alliance?”

“Didn’t you already betray the Overgeared Kingdom and enter into a truce with the empire? Now you want an alliance with us?”

“Betrayed? What betrayal?”

“Didn’t you hand the White Dragon’s Eye to the empire?”

“I indirectly told you that I was handing the White Dragon’s Eye to the empire, allowing you to prepare in advance. Thus, you could resolve it well.”

“Is that how you are packaging it?”

“What packaging? It is the truth. If I really wanted to betray the Overgeared Kingdom, I wouldn’t have let you know the White Dragon’s Eye existed.”

“...It is an excellent speech. Did you learn this from your new strategist?”

“Yes.”

“ ... ”

Ares’ new strategist was much better than Lael had expected. The enlightened Lael saw a bright future.

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Chapter 994

Many things happened in the next two months.

At the end of the truce agreement with the Saharan Empire, the Overgeared Kingdom quickly established an alliance with Valhalla. Without a truce agreement with the empire, Valhalla had gone on to invade their neighboring countries and expand their forces.

The empire felt its back burn. Valhalla and the Overgeared Kingdom... It was presumed they had a hostile relationship after the White Dragon's Eye incident. So how did they suddenly form an alliance? The empire had predicted that the Overgeared Kingdom would keep Valhalla in check while Valhalla would pressure the Overgeared Kingdom with them. Yet their predictions were completely overturned.

Consequently, the empire was forced to ignore Valhalla and concentrate on the Overgeared Kingdom. They relentlessly put pressure on the Overgeared Kingdom.

Then the Overgeared Kingdom started tightening up their borders. The dozens of Overgeared members who received gold medal compensation in the 4th National Competition got new items thanks to Grid. They also exported a massive amount of equipment to Valhalla, strengthening their alliance and accumulating funds.

Meanwhile, Demon Slayer Yura returned from hell and contracted with a king elemental. She was the first one to gain this achievement and became the protagonist of a world message, becoming a topic comparable to Grid during the demon king's subjugation.

“I’m envious...”

The Overgeared members, who mostly contracted with lesser elementals, admired the dignity of the king elemental. They congratulated Yura sincerely, but they couldn’t erase their envy. Yura also gained a big motivation.

‘With this, I am a bit closer...’

She was also a little bit closer to the title of ‘legend.’ Yura was glad that she would be useful in the war against the empire which would occur in the future. Additionally...

“I will erase the goddess of light, who is painted in falsehoods, from the world!”

“Shut up! You evil people!”

The war between the Rebecca Church and the Yatan Church deepened. In order to increase their influence, the Yatan Church dispersed forces across the continent while the Rebecca Church earnestly resisted them.

Yatan’s Servants and Rebecca’s Daughters gathered in one place and damaged several kingdoms.

Interestingly, the Overgeared Kingdom didn’t suffer any damage. It could be considered as due to luck from the heavens since the Vatican was based in the Overgeared Kingdom, but of course, it wasn’t luck. The Overgeared Kingdom wasn’t affected by the war between the Rebecca Church and the Yatan Church purely because of

Damian's efforts.

Damian even went a step further and asked the empire for support, "I believe that the empire can't ignore the Yatan Church and the fight for the peace of the continent."

"..."

The emperor had no justification to refuse sending support to the Rebecca Church and was tearfully forced to send his forces. Simultaneously, Kraugel was spotted in the empire. The place he was seen at after the 4th National Competition was the gravestone of Empress Aria.

It was an event that caused rampant speculation. People guessed that Kraugel had joined the empire. However, the truth was different.

"A great evil lives there."

Kirinus, the best spearsman on the continent, started to

open his heart to Kraugel as he pointed to the imperial palace and revealed the tangled truth around Empress Aria's death. The imperial palace boasted a tremendous scale dozens of times larger than the Overgeared Kingdom. Among them, his finger pointed to the gorgeous palace where Empress Marie resided.

“This evil must be eliminated. If we don't get rid of her, there will be no future for this continent.”

“ ... ”

Kraugel couldn't help feeling in awe. Grid had mentioned a long time ago that one of his goals was to kill the empress.

‘Grid, did you know the whole truth at the time?’

It seemed he had been fighting with a big burden on his shoulders for a long time.

『 The next breaking news. The Fold Kingdom has been undergoing a rapid development in recent years. 』

The Fold Kingdom was a tributary of the Overgeared Kingdom. 70% of the kingdom was mountainous and poor in soil quality. It was a weak country, but its state of mass poverty had improved and its agricultural and military facilities had expanded. This was the result of capital and manpower from the Overgeared Kingdom. The players of the Fold Kingdom benefited from the infrastructure that was gradually evolving and naturally felt affectionate toward the Overgeared Kingdom. People felt a genuine gratitude to the Overgeared Kingdom.

The royal family of the Fold Kingdom came forward to directly praise the Overgeared Kingdom.

“We have to try hard so that King Grid’s mercy isn’t in vain! Don’t be lazy! Don’t be satisfied! Our Fold Kingdom should be one of the pillars supporting the Overgeared Kingdom!”

“Wahhhh!”

The Fold Kingdom became a type of multi-base. It was a really strong force capable of moving and developing industrial facilities and manpower that the Overgeared Kingdom could no longer accommodate, as well as gather new resources based on this.

The strongest Saharan Empire armies—the armies led by the seven dukes—were dispatched to port cities. It was because the water clan started going crazy. The water clan invaded the port cities of the empire and dealt an enormous blow to the empire. Whenever the empire dispatched a suppression force, they would flee to the sea.

They were so hard to track that the empire was forced to place the army at every port city.

[Affinity with the evil eyes king has increased by 1.]

“Phew... It finally reached five points.”

“Congratulations. If you take it slowly, you will someday get 100 points.”

“Yes... I don’t know how many years but...”

The plans of the Overgeared members to build up affinity with the evil eyes king were greatly revised. They recognized it as a long-term project instead of a short-term project and abandoned their impatience. Only one person was different.

“Kukukuk, you have to deal with me today.”

Only Lael didn’t give up and went to the evil eyes’ king every morning and evening. The evil eyes’ king didn’t seem to hate him very much. No, he seemed to have a liking toward the human race itself. It was a change that had occurred from him watching the Overgeared

members for the past two months. Compared to the days when he was isolated and alone... the evil eyes' king felt that interactions with humans were very pleasant and informative.

The heart of the king influenced all of the evil eyes. The evil eyes got more aggressive in their training, and the Destiny Guardians became more organized.

Meanwhile, the number of invaders aiming at the vampire cities was increasing. They were dungeons that the Overgeared Kingdom had been using for many years. The players believed they could make a breakthrough as long as they used the dungeons and headed for Reidan's desert.

Some of them were able to penetrate through the tight guard of the Overgeared members and enter the vampire city. However, the problem was that it was always the 'seventh' city. The invaders experienced the worst hell instead of the best hunting ground.

[The vampire earl 'Noll' has appeared!]

“What trivial bastards dare enter?”

“Hiik!”

“S-Spare us...!”

The power of the noble class vampires was more than rumored. The boy vampire wore armor that neutralized most of the invaders' attack power, and the invaders were helpless as they were killed. Noll grew rapidly from their sacrifices. It was just as the Overgeared Guild intended. The reason why the elite Overgeared troops guarding the entrances of the vampire cities created a gap in the boundary of the seventh city was to raise Noll.

“Lord Chris of Reidan! Today, I will gain your head!”

There was a constant regional conflict in the desert of Reidan, the border between the Overgeared Kingdom

and the empire. In the early days, the Black Knights' cavalry committed a one-sided invasion of Reidan's territory, only to suffer greater damage as time passed. It was because the Reidan soldiers had been fully adapted to the desert terrain while the empire troops had found it strange. Whenever the two armies clashed, the imperial army often suffered one-sided damage. It was painful since the empire had to occupy Reidan to invade the Overgeared Kingdom.

“You want to get my head with this type of skill?”

Moreover, as the Lord of Reidan and duke of the Overgeared Kingdom, Chris' power was too great. The black knights couldn't go up against Chris and the previous Giant Guild members who swept through the battlefield.

“Y-You are just the duke of a small kingdom...!” The Black Knights' anger and hatred reached the peak after losing hundreds of colleagues. They rushed toward Chris whenever he appeared on the battlefield. From Chris'

point of view, they were good nutrients.

“Overgeared King Grid threatens humanity by colluding with different species. This can be called a disaster. I will put down the disaster for the sake of peace on the continent.”

It was a relationship stemming from the emperor’s declaration two months ago. The official relationship between the Overgeared Kingdom and the Saharan Empire was now that of ‘enemies.’ The armed conflict between the two nations started to be recorded as formal wars, not temporary happenings. The ‘war system’ was activated, increasing the players’ experience gain rate.

That’s right. The Overgeared members could now grow through war. Every time they killed an enemy, they gained a high amount of experience, just like catching a monster. Of course, it was an enjoyable system. If it wasn’t for the war system, the Overgeared members would have suffered from the war. The S.A Group had a good grasp of the position of the players.

“Chriiiiiis!” The deputy chief of the Black Knights, who lost an arm to Chris in the preceding war, roared and rushed forward. He was level 385. The Black Knights were a subordinate organization of the Red Knights, but their leaders were comparable to the Red Knights. However, this wasn’t enough to threaten Chris. After all, he was first on the unified rankings. In order to suppress Chris’ talents, effort, and experience, an enemy that was at least the fourth advancement should come out.

[The commander ‘Chris’ has cut off the head of the enemy!]

[The morale of the allies has risen!]

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

Reidan...

In the city that bordered the empire, the elite troops of the Overgeared Kingdom were growing every day.

『 There are many cars in the world. However, the only car that satisfies me is from Daejin Motors. 』

The Daejin car advertisements that used Shin Youngwoo —Grid—as a model started to dominate all media platforms. The Daejin Group had considered Grid’s busy schedule and produced a CF starring him only three months after the end of the National Competition.

“Youngwoo-ssi has an aura that is different from ordinary models and actors. I mean... it is like the dignity of the royalty of European countries? Haha.”

“That’s not true. Your praise is too much.”

“No, it’s not. This isn’t an exaggeration but pure sincerity...”

The advertisement which was completed with an exceptionally high perfection rate would be sent to a total

of 198 countries. In a coffee shop in the lobby of Daejin Motors' headquarters, Youngwoo drank hot chocolate as he watched the advertisement, which was being played continuously on the screen.

“Ah, the development of the new car is expected to be completed soon. The items were chosen well. You can look forward to it.”

Thanks to Shin Youngwoo's ridiculous press conference, the president of Daejin Motors had to develop a new car unexpectedly. The identity of the man sitting next to Youngwoo was the president of Daejin Motors. He had originally planned to meet Youngwoo in his office, but he suddenly wanted to boast to his employees that he was in a coffee store with Grid.

The effect was big. Numerous employees who were in the lobby stopped and stared at the coffee store.

“Wow, I never thought the day would come when I would see God Grid sitting in our lobby.”

“It is a real jackpot. Didn’t he use any correction effects when making his character in Satisfy? The ratio is almost model level.”

“Putting aside proportions and looks, there is a different force about him. He is unlike a normal person.”

“That’s right. Our boss gives off an extraordinary impression, but he is like Extra Number One in front of Grid.”

“Ah, was that our boss?”

“...I only recognized him now.”

The words of the employees in the lobby entered the ears of the president of Daejin Motors. He heard the words ‘extra’, ‘squid’, and ‘folding screen’, but he didn’t care. The president was proud that he was recognized while sitting next to Youngwoo who wielded the highest influence.

‘I should go home early today to boast to my son and grandchild.’

The president was excited and spoke to Youngwoo, “So I was saying... It is the God General Sys.”

“God General Sys?” Youngwoo didn’t understand for a moment. The name of the new fake car that he had thought up of roughly at the press conference wasn’t important enough to remain in Youngwoo’s memories. Youngwoo belatedly pulled out the memory and nodded. “Ah, yes. The new car that I’m looking forward to so much that I can’t sleep at night? I didn’t understand for a moment because I didn’t know you would use the name of God General Sys.”

“Haha, it is the name that Youngwoo yourself gave, so we have to use it. That’s why we’ve decided to produce only one for Youngwoo.”

“That’s right.”

“By the way, what if we made six cars?”

“Six?”

“Yes, two for Youngwoo-ssi’s parents, one for Youngwoo-ssi’s sister, one for Youngwoo, one for Yura, and one for the chairman.”

“Why bother...”

It was an opportunity to get free cars for all his family members. Although it seemed remarkable listening to it the first time, it wasn’t actually free. A tax would be incurred. The cost of production was close to 800 million won, and if he received four cars, the taxes he would have to pay was horrible to imagine. He would rather pay tax for a better-branded car for his parents and give his old car to Sehee.

The president witnessed Youngwoo’s confused expression and misunderstood his thoughts.

“Ah... It isn’t intended to show off the relationship between the two families... This... It is just a pure commemoration...”

‘Ah...’ Youngwoo belatedly noticed the chairman’s intentions. It was to give Grid and his granddaughter a couple car. Additionally, Grid’s family and the chairman would ride the same car. The car proved they had a special relationship. In other words, the chairman wanted to show off.

“Hrmm.”

Well, wouldn’t it be good to let this type of thing emerge? However, it was a story of when he would meet this request. Youngwoo let the president be nervous for a long time before finally opening his mouth.

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Chapter 995

“I understand the chairman’s will. Instead, I have a requirement.”

“What is it?”

This was a chance for him to show off a connection with a chaebol family. It might be a precious opportunity for someone else, but there were no merits for Youngwoo.

The condition he gave was completely unexpected.

“I heard that big companies and famous people are fostering rankers at a business or family level. Is it the same for Daejin?”

The word ranker naturally meant a Satisfy ranker. The president of Daejin Motors looked around uneasily before responding in a low voice, “Of course, we have also made some developments.”

Chairman Lee Jinmyung didn’t appreciate his

granddaughter's enthusiasm for Satisfy, but it was because he had always regarded Yura as his successor. Lee Jinmyung recognized the importance of Satisfy according to the trend of the times and secretly sponsored and fostered rankers at the corporate level. Once they were fully grown and participating in big events, Daejin's reputation would rise naturally. Well, now, Yura's name was sufficient.

“Have Daejin step up and encourage the rankers of the Korean companies and family members to join the Overgeared Guild.”

“...” The president of Daejin Motors made a distorted expression. The thought of Youngwoo eating up all the power that the companies had invested in was absurd and somewhat unpleasant. He felt that he was being treated as a pushover.

Youngwoo shook his hand. “I don't mean to have them permanently join the Overgeared Guild. That isn't possible. I just want to receive support from them in the

form of temporary mercenaries. It will be good for both sides. We will provide at least unique-grade items made by the best blacksmiths of the Overgeared Kingdom as well as top-quality hunting grounds.”

“I guess it is the hunting grounds on the border of Reidan which are much talked about these days.”

“Yes, your level will rise quickly if you hunt imperial soldiers.”

The war of attrition with the empire was gnawing at the power of the Overgeared Kingdom. Since the empire had an army that was hundreds of times larger than the Overgeared Kingdom’s, the constant loss of soldiers would only damage the Overgeared Kingdom.

“Is your ultimate goal to fill the Overgeared army with players instead of NPCs?”

The president of Daejin Motors had little experience playing Satisfy. However, he was the president of a large

company and was able to easily grasp the situation.

Youngwoo nodded while secretly admiring the president.

“You saw it correctly.”

“Umm... Yes, I understand. I’ll tell the chairman. Even so, I don’t know if the other companies will move easily.

Obviously, they will demand a lot.”

“I will coordinate it well. All you have to do is pass on my message to them.”

Youngwoo anticipated what the companies wanted. It was for Grid or the Overgeared members to be models for their companies, to receive items produced from the Overgeared Kingdom, or have corporate publicity signage in the Overgeared Kingdom. Youngwoo was willing to accept them all.

‘In any case, I need a lot of money.’

He could sleep less. If he divided his time well, he could promote the companies. There were many blacksmiths,

so he could produce as many items as they wanted.

‘I will draw on the resources and assets of the companies while the companies will borrow my knowledge and skills.’

The deal was likely to be fully realized. The companies’ evaluation of the Overgeared Kingdom was very high. However, tying himself up to a large number of companies from the outset would cut his value, so he only used domestic companies.

‘A funny picture will come out.’

The rankers were easy to control because they belonged to a company or a family. He would gather hundreds of thousands of them in Reidan to consume the imperial troops. Of course, this was Lauel’s big picture.

In Satisfy, darkness was the symbol of evil, and evil was the great demons. This formula was applied to the

elementals. It was a natural outcome for the light elemental king to favor Yura, who had hunted the most number of demons among the players.

[Light Elemental King Contractor]

[You can use the highest ranked light elemental.

Current level of the highest-grade light elemental: 1

-Available Elemental Techniques-

* The energy of the elemental king is infinite. The use of the elemental doesn't consume the resources of the contractor.]

[Sword of Light]

[Makes the elemental into a sword of light.

The Sword of Light follows the contractor...]

[Flash]

[The light elemental will ‘instantaneously’ move to the target pointed out by the contractor.

If the target is strong, it will shine intensely...]

[Elemental King Summoning Lv. 1]

[Summons an elemental king to the present age through the light elemental.

The ability of the light elemental king is affected by the ability of the contractor.

The low skill level limits the abilities of the light elemental king.

Summoning Duration Time: 10 minutes.

Cooldown Time: 30 hours.]

“ ... ”

Yura hadn’t been expecting much after she was forced to

postpone her visit to the World Tree due to hunting in hell. Most of her colleagues had contracted with lower to intermediate elementals, and she thought she would be the same. Yet it ended up being an elemental king.

She once again owed a great debt to Grid. Her current self wouldn't exist if she hadn't met him in the temple in the past. She would still be one of Yatan's Servants, struggling against the Rebecca Church and Overgeared Kingdom. Yura would have regreted it every day.

“I'll become someone you can count on.”

Step.

Today, Yura didn't open the gate to hell. The place she came to was the city of Reidan surrounded by the desert.

“Yura?”

On the walls, the faces of the Overgeared members—who were tired from the inexhaustible imperial army—brightened. Yura had been focused on hell hunting since

the beginning of the 4th National Competition until the present. Consequently, they hadn't expected her to join the war so soon. The gold medalist in Drawing the Saint Sword and silver medalist in PvP—she was a strong representative of the Overgeared Guild. She was a power that could do the work of ~4–5 of the top Overgeared members alone. The Overgeared members were reassured that she would be with them in the future.

After a while...

“Hell Leap.”

The Overgeared members witnessed Yura's development and realized how much they had underestimated her. She jumped into space itself and moved to hell, leaving the gate that connected hell to the present world. Demons popped out of the gate and into the middle of the battlefield.

“Eh?”

There was the sudden appearance of the red dimensional door and the demons pouring from it. The imperial soldiers were stunned by the unrealistic sight and forgot to even scream as they became food for the demons.

“You can summon demons?” Chris asked with a surprised expression. A demon hunter could summon demons...? It was a bizarre contradiction.

Yura shook her head. “I simply opened a passage.”

Hell Leap—it was a skill that temporarily transferred her body to hell. The user didn’t know where they would appear in hell, and the temporary transmission only lasted for one second. Yura took one second to identify the place she appeared, recognized the presence of a sufficient number of demons in the vicinity and opened the gate while escaping from hell. She applied the escape technique as a summoning technique. For the imperial soldiers, it was literally a hell gate.

“Aaaack!”

“Hiik! S-Spare me...!”

The duration of the gate was one minute. It was plenty of time. Demons with the instinct of eating humans utilized the gate actively. They flew forward with full power.

“W-Wow...”

Thousands of demons popped out and massacred the imperial soldiers, causing the Overgeared members to feel overwhelmed. They worried that they would be next after the imperial army was destroyed. However, they had Yura. As the imperial soldiers were chewed up, the demons who turned their attention to the Overgeared members in a hungry manner were pierced by Yura’s bullets.

“There haven’t been too many prey these days.”

“The Vatican is closed, so it is natural to have no guests.”

At a mountain village near the Vatican, there was a unique village with large and small Rebecca statues in many places. Originally it was filled with tourists wanting to visit the Vatican, but it had been dusty of late. The Vatican was temporarily closed as the war between the Rebecca Church and Yatan Church intensified. As such, the Vatican wasn't accepting outsiders, so no tourists were visiting the village.

“Hmmm.”

Thanks to this, Shay was bored. The assassins—Shay, Kerb, and Sniffer—were a vicious PK group that worked with Dong Pao—a Rebecca priest—in luring tourists to certain areas and stealing their money. However, they were also the benefactors who informed Grid about Marie Rose's presence and gave him Kasim. Of course, they hadn't meant to be benefactors.

“I want to release some stress, but it isn't working.”

“I should pick up an assassination request today.”

“I have done more than 100 commissions this month. I don’t like it anymore. It is annoying. I need some healing.”

“Eh? Hey.”

The trio sitting on the terrace of the restaurant turned their gaze toward the person at the entrance of the village. Just by looking, it was obvious that the person had a lot of money. It was a man wearing unusual sunglasses. They didn’t see his face and ID because he was wearing a helmet. but based on the overall armed status, his level was in the low 200s.

“Doesn’t he look like a character made by a man with some money?”

“Yes. All the level 200 items are enhanced.”

“He might be a gold spoon.”

The items scattered a subtle glow. This was proper prey.

Shay's group exchanged sly smiles with each other and got up. The three people came down from the terrace and were engaged in daily conversation as they passed by the unidentified man. Yes, they passed by the prey they had been waiting for.

‘X! Leave quickly!’

The trio hastened their pace. They had an iron rule. This cardinal rule was that they didn't mix with a person who hid their face and ID. Why? In the past, they had a bad experience with Grid who concealed his identity. They didn't want to go through that terrible experience twice. Since then, Shay's group excluded unknown targets from their PK list. It was a type of phobia.

“Oh, it would be good if we could hunt pushovers like in the old days.”

“It was almost a windfall to meet those kids. Still, what can we do when it is a one in a million case?”

They couldn't be discouraged. The reason why Shay's party could PK in one area for a long time was because they were cautious. In particular, the most important thing was their affinity with the villagers. The villagers didn't doubt Shay's party, who were friendly and kind, and never thought they were bandits. Sometimes, paladins from the Rebecca Church would come down to the village and ask about the bandits, but they never cared about Shay's party. This was the importance of image management.

“It is impossible today. Perhaps we should go to the guild and ask...?”

The trio left the village only to freeze like a stone statue. They noticed that the unidentified man was following closely behind them. The man took off the helmet and black hair flowed down. The revealed name was...

“G-Grid!”

Shay's party was full of hatred. They even wanted to kill

Grid.

“This is great. Have you been doing this in the same place for many years?”

“T-That, sometimes... Sometimes just...”

“T-That’s right! These days, we mostly work in other places. We sometimes come here for healing!”

“I-It is like a heart that misses home... Hahaha...”

Shay was a single digit ranker on the assassin’s ranking. During recent times, he had fallen to the top 20, but he still had excellent skills. In particular, he had a lot of experience with PK and excelled in PK skills. Even so, he was modest in front of Grid. He had been beaten by Grid several times and was afraid of him. Grid suggested to them, “Go to Reidan. In that place, you can cheat, kill, and steal from the empire’s players. Won’t it be more fun to play on a bigger stage than in a village like this?”

“...You want to use us as a tool of war?”

“D-Do you think we will cooperate with you?”

“Yes, if you don’t want to die. You will be killed by me and then have a kill order placed on you.”

“...Shall we leave right now?”

“Assassination is our specialty. Isn’t that why you came to us? We’ll definitely be a great help to you.”

“Yes, I’m looking forward to it. You will be rewarded if you play an active role.”

Grid had to mobilize as many contacts as possible in order to deal with the empire. Thus, Grid was wandering in search of connections, but they were mostly evil ones. He was fortunate that he was stronger than those he had a bad relationship with.

“Next is Bubat... Hmm...”

After confirming the appearance of Shay’s party, Grid

was ready to use the return scroll, only to stop. Now that he was here, he became curious about ‘that’ place. Grid failed to recall the old location and had to ask Shay, “That dungeon, where was it?”

“Dungeon? Ah, the one with the vampire duke sealed? It is a forbidden area, so it isn’t stored on the map.”

It was a space where magic and skills were blocked because of a powerful evil influence. That was the space where Shay’s party used to hunt the players.

“It is approximately three kilometers northeast of here... Hey, forget it. Just follow me.”

It was complicated to explain in words. Instead, Shay just moved forward, and Grid followed behind him. Shay was making a smug smile. He was timid, but he wanted payback.

‘No matter how great Grid is, he can’t catch up with my speed when I’m a master of swiftness.’

Grid would try to chase Shay and be humiliated. Shay imagined Grid's expression and hummed. Then he used a skill that increased his movement speed to the peak. However...

“ ... ”

Grid maintained the appropriate distance behind Shay without much difficulty. He was very agile and had recently created a set of items that sped up his movements. Shay started crying. 'Filthy bastard. Really filthy bastard. Eating everything alone.'

He would quickly finish this side of the world and cut off all connections with Grid forever. He would leave for the other side of the continent, so he wouldn't get involved with Grid again.

'No, let's go to the East Continent,' Shay vowed repeatedly.

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Chapter 996

People weren't seriously concerned about the war situation in the Overgeared Kingdom. Was the empire's army hundreds of times larger than the Overgeared Kingdom?

“What does that mean?”

Grid would come forward and slaughter the enemies as always. People took it for granted, and the experts didn't disagree. It was because Grid and the Overgeared members had shown too much. They always handled crises in ways and methods that transcended common sense.

Then what was the truth? The situation of the Overgeared Kingdom was like a candle flickering in the wind. The armies of the seven dukes were tied down for a while as they defended the port cities, but there were still the magicians of the Tower of Eternity, the magic machines, the Red Knights, the Five Pillars, and so on.

The empire hadn't pulled out their real power yet. On the other hand, the Overgeared Kingdom had already put a lot of effort into stopping the empire's troops.

Grid was nervous. He was anxious because bad results kept coming up. The reason why Grid used methods, such as dealing with the companies and using his network of connections, was in effort to change the expected outcome. He came here was the same reason.

[Marie Rose's evil influence makes your magic power turbid. All types of spells and skills aren't available.]

[You have resisted.]

It was an ominous entrance that looked like the mouth of a monster. This was the cave Marie Rose was trapped in. The vampire duke sealed by the second pope Chreshler and Rebecca's Daughters—the ultimate vampire who transcended Shizo Beriache—was released from the seal by none other than Grid.

‘It happened because of Malacus’ Cloak.’

An unintentional accident had occurred. Grid was looking forward to the effect of the Blood King Candidate.

[Blood King Candidate]

[You have become a candidate to be a blood king.

You will give a sense of pressure to ordinary vampires. All ordinary vampires hostile toward you will have their stats decreased by 15%.

You will give a sense of confusion to true blood vampires. All true blood vampires hostile toward you will have their stats decreased by 8%.

Direct descendant vampires will be interested in you. Any direct descendant vampires facing you will temporally awaken from the Curse of Idleness.]

Grid had sealed four direct descendants, so the title

Qualification of a Blood King was promoted to Blood King Candidate. The alertness of the direct descendants rose, and this was enough to awaken them from the Curse of Idleness. This might work positively for Marie Rose.

‘I am happy to play.’

Noll said that when he faced Blood King Candidate Grid, the thought that ‘everything was annoying’ had been erased from his head and he had been filled with motivation. He’d felt ‘emotions’ for the first time since he was born, and he had been filled with a fearsome anger and killing intent toward Grid.

Noll had described the event of the day like this, “I realized I was alive after feeling the emotion. Once the Curse of Idleness was broken, I felt sorry for the wasted time and even grateful to you for making me angry and forgetting the curse.”

This was why Grid looked forward to the effect of Blood

King Candidate.

‘If Marie Rose is like Noll...’

Would she be thankful to him for freeing her from the seal and the Curse of Idleness? What emotions would she feel, and if she felt favorable toward him, would she take a cooperative attitude? Of course, it was an extremely optimistic idea. He could provoke Marie Rose and be slain by her.

However, the circumstances weren't clear, so Grid planned to grasp a straw and contact her. Marie Rose was one of the most powerful beings in the world. The benefits that came from having her as a companion were so huge that it couldn't compare with the value of Grid's life.

‘It is a gamble I should challenge once.’

Grid came here to increase his chances of the gamble. He sent Shay back and entered the cave alone. Then he

pulled out a pickaxe and held it.

‘Braham said it previously. Marie Rose’s evil influence was inherited from Shizo Beriache, and she has a very strong personality.’

He knew because he actually experienced it. It had been ~15–17 years since Marie Rose left here, but there were still remnants of her evil energy. Grid made a hypothesis, ‘The cave that sealed Marie Rose for hundreds of years will have a thick evil influence...’

It was a natural formula that caves had minerals. That’s right. Grid thought it was likely that the minerals present in the cave were affected by Marie Rose’s evil influence. He wasn’t expecting much from the performance of the minerals.

‘The minerals affected by Marie Rose’s evil influence will have a low rating. I only hope that they aren’t corroded by the evil influence.’

The land near the cave was barren. Thus, the minerals which were directly exposed to Marie Rose's evil influence might've become dusty and corroded.

Nevertheless, the reason why Grid needed the minerals was to buy Marie Rose's favor when they met someday.

'She's very sensitive to the smell of blood from Malacus' Cloak.'

It was enough to wake her up from the seal after hundreds of years!

'If I am wearing items that contain her evil influence, she will recognize them immediately.'

He couldn't help being impressed with his way of thinking. His thoughts were occasionally extraordinary. Then Grid started looking closely at the cave. It was to observe the presence of minerals. However, there were only stones at the entrance, and he had to go deeper.

[Marie Rose's evil influence makes your magic power

turbid. All types of spells and skills aren't available.]

[You have resisted.]

[The remnants of the evil influence is eating at your physical and mental strength. You have fallen into the 'weak' and 'confused' state.]

[You have resisted.]

The deeper he went, the thicker the concentration of evil influence and the higher the physical burden became. Grid was able to resist them, but it would've been different for Shay's party.

'They can't even enter here.'

Marie Rose's seal wasn't defiled. Once he learned that, Grid's mind felt more comfortable. He was once again impressed by the fraudulent nature of a 'legend' and felt thankful as he arrived at the innermost part of the cave.

'It is surprisingly big.'

He hasn't known it from the outside, but it was a huge cave. It took 40 minutes to reach this place despite there being only one road.

‘She has been sleeping here for hundreds of years.’

Grid looked at the coffin in the middle of the space. It was a pure white coffin. The beautiful figure of Marie Rose sleeping there naturally came to his mind.

“Ah...”

He had imagined it, but her real beauty was enough to make him feel in awe. It was mysterious. Grid emerged from his thoughts and carefully observed the wall of this space. It was in order to find minerals, but most of them were already corroded by the evil influence. This space was quite big, and it took time to search.

‘Ah, the efficiency is too bad.’

If it wasn't for the residual evil influence, he would've

called Minor over right away. The minerals detector hadn't found new minerals in a long time, and he was inactive these days.

‘Still, he isn't playing around...’

For a few years already, Minor had been forced to work in the library without a break. He read books related to minerals and geography and expanded his knowledge. Grid raised the building level of the library purple for Minor's sake. Increasing the level of the library widened the variety of books it handled.

‘Minor's mineral detection capability is evolving steadily.’

In order for Minor to be more active, the territory of the Overgeared Kingdom had to expand. The larger the scope of Minor's activities, the greater the likelihood was of finding new minerals. Thus, he couldn't lose more in the war.

‘I absolutely can't lose any land. Absolutely not.’

The Overgeared Kingdom had been built by Grid and his colleagues. It contained all of their hard work and enthusiasm. Yet it was going to be taken away by others now? Grid couldn't accept it. He had no thoughts of letting it being taken away. Thus, he planned to depend on Marie Rose.

“Ah...!”

Grid searched for a while and finally found his goal. There were some minerals in the corner of the space which was so darkened by the evil influence that it was blacker than darkness.

“This is it!”

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

Grid started mining. His skill handling the pickaxe wasn't rusty and was still amazing. Any miner who saw it would cry. By the way...

[The mining has failed.]

[The mining has failed.]

[The mining...]

[The continuous mining failure has increased the possibility of damage to the stones.]

“...?”

It was a mineral that endured Marie Rose’s evil influence. This was the first time Grid had seen such a stubborn mineral. The stones—which were embedded deep into the ground—weren’t easy to mine, even with Grid’s skills.

‘Ah, what to do?’

Failing to mine a mineral one or two more times could damage the mineral and reduce its value. Grid pondered for a moment if he should bring Minor inside, even if it was dangerous. Then he shook his head.

‘I need the residue of the evil influence, not the mineral itself.’

In the first place, he didn’t have any expectations for the performance of a weakened mineral. As mentioned earlier, the mineral itself might be useless. It wouldn’t be a problem if he kept failing in the mining and damaged it. Grid gave up on his idea and started mining again. Surprisingly, the mining succeeded without failing once.

[You have succeeded in the mining.]

[The Unidentified Iron Ore has been acquired.]

“Legendary Blacksmith’s Appraisal.”

[The information about the target item has been updated.]

Ttiring~

[Iron Ore with Evil Energy]

[An iron ore that has been saturated with evil energy for many years.

Care is required when handling it.

There is a possibility of dying when touching it by hand.

Weight: 5]

[This item has a hidden function!]

[Iron Ore with the Power of Transcendence]

[An iron ore imbued with the power of an existence that isn't subject to death.

Anyone who can cope with the evil influence of the iron ore can obtain the hidden strength behind it.

* There is an option to add stats when using it as an item making material.

However, there is a high possibility that all types of

restrictions will arise due to the evil influence.

Weight: 5]

“Huh...”

From an ordinary person’s standpoint, it didn’t look very good because of the evil influence.

“...Hahahat.”

Was there any more? Grid’s eyes that were blank for a while lit up. He started to search the entire cave again. The coffin which had been watching Grid closely asked, - Did you wake up Marie Rose?

“...?” Feeling stunned, Grid was lost for words.

The coffin introduced itself,-I am 2nd Pope Chreshler.

“...?”

Was this also Pagma’s work?

‘Is he crazy?’

No, he wasn't. Pagma had locked the soul of 5th Pope Franz into the sword despite Franz being his friend. As far as Grid knew, there was no contact between Pagma and the second pope.

‘...Thus, he could do it without any burden.’

Grid's expression was awkward as the coffin inquired again, -You woke up Marie Rose, right? Why did you wake up the person sleeping inside me?

“No, it wasn't me. It was empty when I came here, ” Grid denied it. He didn't know what would happen if he revealed the truth. Grid overlooked one fact. The first pope and second pope—those who made the Rebecca Church transcended the category of ordinary humans. Grid couldn't deceive the ego of a transcendent.

-You are lying to me right now.

The coffin flew and hit Grid.

“Eek...?”

Was he being beaten up by a coffin? Grid had suffered through a lot in his life, and he thought this was absurd and unfair. Then the coffin scoffed contemptuously at him, -Did you learn to lie from Pagma while inheriting his skills?

“...!?”

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Chapter 997

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The saint had been crowned by the heroes and had become pope. The pope was above the heroes. This was the final chapter of the story. As could be seen from the overall picture, the first pope had been a very special

person. He had destroyed the great demons and built up faith. He was the great person who had saved all of humanity. It was highly-rated compared to other legends.

The Rebecca members revered him as a god-class being. Would such a great person select just anyone as his successor? Absolutely not. The first pope had searched for someone more talented than himself to be his successor, and this was Chreshler. Hundreds of years later, he became a person who couldn't leave a coffin but it wasn't good to look down on him.

“It's a lie? But I really wasn't lying.” Grid tried to resolve Chreshler's misunderstanding. “Your Holiness' coffin was already empty when I arrived here. Marie Rose was already gone. Really.”

-You are a really bad guy.

“Huh?”

-My ego was sealed in the coffin made of sacred wood and is designed to wake up when an intruder enters. This is the second time I woke up.

“...?”

-The first time I woke up, Marie Rose was still sleeping in me. Now she isn't.

“...So?”

-So?

So? He didn't understand...? The pretend innocence of Pagma's successor was abominable. If he didn't let Marie Rose go, who did it? The coffin jumped on its own. It was an absurd sight! Grid tried to avoid the attack of the coffin but failed. The coffin was as fast as Faker using Lantier's technique.

[You have suffered 33,780 damage!]

“Keok! C-Crazy!”

What the hell was going on? The unpleasant beating hurt too much. Grid would die with one or two more hits.

Chreshler's voice entered the ears of the bewildered Grid, -You're still alive?I didn't know I had become so weak.Is there a limit even though I took over the sacred wood?

“I-I don't understand what you're saying, but it is a misunderstanding.

-Misunderstanding?Misunderstanding~?

‘I-Is this a human (?)?’

Grid sensed it. Chreshler had once been considered as the strongest pope ever, and he had been a great man who left his name in history. A conversation wasn't going to work with him.

‘Let's run away.’

Grid judged that he really could die here. He wanted Chreshler's information about Pagma and the minerals,

but he decided to give up. He didn't want to die because of a coffin!

“Quick Movements! Blackening!” Grid used his skills to escape from this place.

-...Hmm, what? It does seem to be a misunderstanding. Chreshler calmed his agitation and stepped back.

Grid wished Chreshler's attitude had changed one second faster. “...?!”

It was a higher power and instinct that transcended skills and the concept of magic. The existence of Chreshler denied any evil energy. Grid's Blackening was lifted, and the haze of demonic energy melted away like snow under the sun.

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energy!]

[There is a severe recoil in your body!]

[You have suffered 2,265,320 damage!]

[A legend doesn't die easily. Your health is fixed to a minimum...]

“Cough! Cough, cough!”

What was this? Grid was astonished by the strong impact. Blood poured out from a hole in his body, and he trembled. Chreshler was stunned.

-You emitted demonic energy in front of me? Were you going to commit suicide? I'm surprised.

“Pant... Pant...”

What skill was this? Chreshler came up to Grid who was coughing up blood. He was appalled by the sight of the empty coffin floating in the air.

-Well, you survived.This is why a legend is good.In any case, a cockroach is a cockroach.

“Kuoock... What did you just do?”

-I didn't do anything.My presence as a pope detected and extinguished your evil energy.

“ ... ”

-There is no need to look at me like I'm a monster.The pope's presence doesn't work on Marie Rose.Uh, I have to catch her and seal her...

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-I guess the lifespan of the sacred wood was shorter than I thought.I think you didn't release Marie Rose from the seal. It is that the divine power of the coffin weakened and Marie Rose woke up herself from the seal.

It was true. Grid might've stimulated Marie Rose, but he wasn't the one to release Marie Rose's seal. She woke up

by herself and left this place by herself. Grid just gave her the smell of blood.

‘...In the end, I am a contributor.’

He wasn't stupid enough to explain it though. Grid took a potion and asked Chreshler, "Were you killed when you sealed Marie Rose?"

-No?I sealed Marie Rose and lived well for decades, dying after a long time.I lived until I was 110.

“Then how did you seal Marie Rose before you became the coffin?”

-I naturally sealed her with my holy power.However, the third pope was short-lived, and the fourth and fifth generations were so weak that they couldn't bear Marie Rose's evil influence.I felt that Marie Rose was going to awaken, so I was forced to die and become a coffin.I placed my ego into the coffin made of sacred wood.

“Was it Pagma who helped you at the time?”

-Yes. That jerk... He cheated me.

“...?”

-He told me that my senses would remain, so I could feel Marie Rose in me forever even when I'm asleep. It was fucking bullshit.

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‘Indeed, people should live a good life.’

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you sow.’ Chreshler spoke to the expectant Grid, -Lie down in me.

“...In your coffin?”

-Isn’t it better to see it once than listen a hundred times? I’m going to show you my old memories.

Still, wasn’t lying down in a coffin too much? Grid faced the wide open coffin and was forced to hesitate. As a living person, lying down in a place where the dead stayed was uncomfortable. However, this only lasted for a moment. Grid nodded and lay down in the coffin. Then...

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“...!”

He received an unexpected benefit! Grid was delighted as his vision turned dark. When he opened his eyes again, he saw a long-haired man standing in front of him. It was a beautiful man who looked like a painting of the Hwarang from the Silla Dynasty hanging in an art gallery. (TL: Flower youths, an elite warrior group of Silla known for their beauty.)

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Chapter 999

Chapter 998

Originally, fighting energy—the resource of the Hero King—only accumulated in battle. It was a great pressure for Grid to use the Undefeated King's Swordsmanship when it consumed fighting energy. Once his fighting energy dispersed and his stats fell, the danger was too great. Grid desperately wanted the 'sword energy' resource of a great swordsman.

Now at this moment...

'Sword energy!'

This was an opportunity to look at how Pagma used sword energy in the past. Grid sensed it.

'Sword energy will be released!'

So far, Grid had taken every opportunity to learn

Pagma's skills. He had gained them from hidden pieces, murals, quests, and the Hall of Fame. Grid had been able to acquire Pagma's skills whenever he followed the arrangements Pagma had left behind. Then what about Great Swordsman Pagma's Sword Dance?

It was a skill that had evolved using the goddess' blessing. Grid hadn't learned it through any knowledge or hints left behind by Pagma. This meant it was half-completed.

'I can't miss this opportunity!'

Grid's eyes widened. He hoped that in witnessing Pagma fighting Chreshler and understanding the Great Swordsman Pagma, Grid would be reborn as a genuine 'great swordsman.'

"Huhu, look at this guy who has committed unpardonable atrocities against humans."

Contrary to Grid's expectations, a battle didn't occur. It

was because Chreshler stepped back.

“You want to point your sword at an old man who might die tomorrow? Hey, I’m 110 years old this year, 110. My blood pressure will elevate just from swinging the sword and I can die. Eh, you are a bad guy. I didn’t know that you would use such means.”

“...” Pagma, who had drawn his sword, showed no special reaction. He listened to Chreshler’s unusual words and replied quietly, “If you might die tomorrow anyway, does it matter if you die today?”

“W-What?”

“Your Holiness, please be prepared to die and teach me.”

“Hah! I have never seen such a shameless fellow! The cooked stew doesn’t taste right, so you added some politeness and boiled it again? It is the first time in my life that I’ve met someone like you!”

“Your Holiness, the current peace isn’t eternal. If you die

after the first pope, the power to suppress hell will disappear. The age of grief will occur again as the forces of the Yatan Church rise and the great demons run wild without fear.”

“You know that yet you still sealed our church’s three treasures?”

“It was a friend’s request.”

“A friend’s request? Huhu, what ludicrous words. An insane person like you has friends? You don’t know what loyalty is.”

“I will become stronger.”

“...?”

“I will become strong and defend the world without the need for the Rebecca Church and Franz. I was prepared for this, so I fulfilled my friend’s request. Please cooperate with me.” Pagma raised his sword.

Chreshler clicked his tongue. “Protecting the peace of this world alone? As the descendant of a fallen god, you are arrogant. Tsk, you yangbans.”

“I’m ignorant about the history of the yangbans. I have never thought of myself as the descendant of a god. I just want to save humanity as a human.”

“Then are you going to kill this old man right now? Is that really the duty of a human?”

“...Your sacrifice will become an opportunity to save tens of millions of people, so it is righteous and justified.”

“Kuk, kukukuk! You are an arrogant and selfish man!”

Chreshler’s anger was transmitted to Grid who was assimilated with him. Chreshler was disgusted with Pagma. “From a human’s perspective, you are out of line. You don’t feel it yourself?”

“I am ready to take the blame.”

“Shut up! Your thoughts aren’t as sublime as you think they are! You don’t know? You don’t know because you are a yangban! You aren’t in a position to speak for humans!”

“What is the difference between a yangban and a human? A yangban lives longer and has gained greater power, but they are no different from humans. Our minds, our aversion to evil, and our appearances are the same as humans. We even bleed like humans. Every human is equal, so I will fight for humans.”

“Crazy bastard. You are crazy. A crazy maniac who doesn’t know he is crazy. Oh, good. It is better for you to die here. It was too risky to keep you alive.”

It was close to a miracle. Chreshler’s faith was like a sea that created infinite holy power. This holy power was exercised according to Chreshler’s will. Hundreds of thousands of spears of light poured out. Pagma looked like his limbs were pierced, and it seemed like he would die instantly.

However, the reverse happened. Pagma had already completed two linked sword dances. It was a readable move because Grid currently shared Chreshler's vision.

“Flower Revolve.”

‘...!’ Grid was astonished. Hundreds of petals containing sword energy bloomed as they revolved. All the spears of light that aimed at Pagma returned to Chreshler. Chreshler set up a barrier of light to absorb the spears and was honestly amazed. “It is a curious swordsmanship. You are the best after Muller and the Undefeated King.”

“I can't compare to them in swordsmanship. That's why I have to develop.”

“Even by selling your soul to a great demon?”

“ ... ”

“Kukuk, you aren't denying it.”

This man was dangerous. He shouldn't be kept alive. Chreshler's intuition told him this. He believed that his last mission was to kill this distorted man in front of him.

“The pope said this. He wouldn't have chosen me as a successor if it wasn't for the crisis. My martial arts were always too weak that he didn't accept it. However, you are worse than me. You don't sympathize with anyone. You are insensitive to the suffering of those who are sacrificed for your purposes. I don't know if you were like this from the beginning or that you've changed but you are already evil.”

Chreshler's body was covered with 12 colors of light. The sword and armor hanging on the wall were wrapped in five colors of light and flew to Chreshler. He applied over 17 types of buffs to himself and his battle gear. A too powerful force shattered the ground and shook the building. As Chreshler's power overflowed, Grid felt naked. He could see the 'world that transcendents saw.'

-!

Time stopped. In a world where only light refraction occurred, Chreshler advanced by breaking through the stopped fragments in the air. As the distance between him and Pagma narrowed, Pagma's eyes didn't blink once. A sword that followed the light—it was only after it penetrated Pagma's shoulder three times that a sound was made belatedly, and blood splashed out. Grid saw the gushing blood that consisted of numerous 'droplets'.

'He avoided it?'

Grid gulped. Pagma clearly avoided the pope's sword that was fired like a flash of light. It was originally the heart that should be pierced, but the damage was minimized to one shoulder.

"..." Pagma's physical body started to strengthen. Blacksmith's Rage was a buff that Grid knew, but the other four buffs were unfamiliar. They could be skills that belonged to Pagma's items or Pagma's own

skills.

-!

The swords continued to collide in the air, but there was no sound. The present world was like a paused movie. The blood that flowed from Pagma's shoulder froze as thousands of droplets in the air. Against this backdrop, Pagma and Chreshler moved and exchanged blows. The sounds could only be heard after the collision. In that gap, Pagma and Chreshler had already exchanged dozens of blows.

“Transcend Kill Flower.”

“Transcended Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle.”

“Linked Revolve Pinnacle.”

“Linked Kill Revolve Pinnacle Chop.”

“Linked Kill Flower.”

“Transcended Pinnacle Kill Chop.”

The sword dances continued constantly.

‘Pagma admired the work of Dainsleif and Valhalla and gave an example. It is said that he showed off his swordsmanship while wearing Dainsleif, which has never been used by any hero. The beauty of it was unbelievable, and the swordsmanship seemed to pierce the sky, creating lightning.’ The description that Albatino, Khan’s ancestor, used to describe Pagma's Sword Dance came to Grid’s mind.

A swordsmanship that pierced the sky—Grid had always thought it was an exaggeration. It was because there was a huge gap in the Pagma's Sword Dance that he had learned and the description of Pagma's Sword Dance. However, not now. This was the true Pagma's Sword Dance.

“Cough!” Pagma, who was covered in wounds, struggled to stand up. Meanwhile, Chreshler had only allowed one

blow, but he was staggering. He used heal to restore the wound, but the 17 buffs were coming to an end.

“Damn rotten thing,” the pope’s disbelieving voice emerged from Chreshler’s mouth. He grumbled like a child, “Ah, I don’t know! No! I quit!”

“Pant... Pant... Pant...” Pagma didn’t have the energy to even speak.

It couldn’t be helped because his magic and swordsmanship had reached the limit. Chreshler took off his armor. “It is hard. My body is heavy.”

“Pant... Pant...”

“You really tried to kill me. Shit. It is sad to be old.”

“Pant... Pant... Thank... Thank you...” Pagma, who had been holding on, finally flopped down. His fingertips were trembling. “Thank you for Your Holiness’ teachings... More sword dances are available...”

“Tsk,” Chreshler clicked his tongue. He was still worried. Chreshler thought that Pagma was dangerous and should be killed. However, he didn’t want to be hurt by such a disaster. Eventually, Chreshler chose to flee.

‘In any case, I’ll die soon, so the fate should be borne by those left behind.’

Ah, he didn’t know. He would just take a break. This was his last thought. Chreshler’s consciousness was cut off. He had died. Chreshler’s bluff that he would die if he did too much hadn’t been an exaggeration. In his darkening vision...

“Go peacefully. I will respectfully enshrine your soul in the Sacred Wood Coffin.”

Pagma’s figure could be seen bowing politely. Then Grid returned to reality.

[The past experience is over!]

[You have seen and understood the Great Swordsman

Pagma's Sword Dance!]

[The title 'Great Swordsman' has been obtained.]

[The new resource 'Sword Energy' has opened because of the title effect.]

[The effect of the Sword Mastery skill has slightly increased due to the title effect.]

[The information of Great Swordsman Pagma's Sword Dance has updated.]

[The fusion of sword dances has become relatively free.]

[When using a sword, the resource consumed will be changed from mana to sword energy.]

[Instead of having an increase in level, the sword dances have been reset to level 1. The maximum level of all sword dances is three. However, the level of the fusion sword dances is fixed at one.]

[The new sword dance Flower has been learned.]

“...” Grid opened his eyes quietly in the coffin. He was licking his lips when Chreshler’s voice entered his ears, - There’s nothing special, right? That’s all I know about Pagma. He is a bit crazy—a liar and the murderer of an old man.

“Ah, yes...”

There were too many parts to argue about that Grid turned away. He shook his head and rose from the coffin. Grid felt himself becoming stronger.

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Chapter 1000

“I’m curious about the identity of this person!”

It was a place where two giants that shook the foundations of the continent were asleep. There were few places as special, even if the entire continent were searched. Thus, Grid was obsessed. A person who visited this place ahead of himself—Grid wanted to know their identity.

‘An ordinary person can’t endure Marie Rose’s evil influence. The first visitor must not be a normal person.’

It must be a presence similar to a legend. What was their identity, and why did they come here? Perhaps it would be profitable if the hidden story was heard. Information was power. This was the calculation of a seasoned player, and fortunately, Chreshler was cooperative.

-It was Muller.

“Muller? Ah, Muller? Sword Saint Muller?”

-Yes.

“Right... Huh?” Grid had been nodding only to stiffen like he was hit by a lightning bolt. Sword Saint Muller, the strongest human being—he was rated as the strongest among all the legends, not just the past legends. Grid was moved at the thought of hearing his story.

Then he had a question. ‘Wait... Muller is a person from the era before Pagma. Yet he visited here? Isn’t it right for Muller to have died before this place existed?’

The precise birth date of Sword Saint Muller hadn’t been recorded. However, Muller’s period of activity recorded in official history coincided with the activities of the first pope. From approximately 320–400 years ago, he was the protagonist who sealed the great demons and ended the era of grief, dying around 250 years ago.

“How many years ago was it?” Grid asked the question.

-It was around 160 years ago?Chreshler gave a shocking answer.

‘Wasn’t that the age when Pagma was active? Ah!’Grid noticed.‘Muller also lived for hundreds of years like Pagma!’

In retrospect, someone said that Muller died 150 years ago. Grid thought it was distorted information at the time. Then he recalled Pagma who had lived for hundreds of years and thought he had likely lived through some type of technique.

‘Pagma didn’t know that.’

Pagma had thought that Muller was dead. If he had known that Muller was alive, he would’ve chosen to cooperate with Muller rather than contract with a great demon.

-I’ve told you, right?I’m going to sleep.It feels lonely to wake up in a world without Marie Rose.

“W-Wait a minute! Why did Muller come here 160 years ago? Additionally, when did he die?”

-You have a lot to say. Why do you want so much without giving anything in return? Pagma made this coffin but what did you do? Don't you have any shame?

“...!” Grid was stung.

He was reminded that Chreshler had no reason to be favorable to him.

-I'm sleeping. Bye.

“W-Wait...!”

Chreshler shouldn't leave this way. Grid had to hear the backstory. With this in mind, Grid shouted, “I know where Marie Rose is!”

Chreshler's reaction was surprisingly lukewarm. -I know. She is somewhere in the vampire cities. So what? Will you bring her? Can you bring her?

“ ... ”

-Don't spit out words that you can't handle. You can suffer the wrath of a fierce anger.

“...I'm sorry.”

-Hmm...You have done enough good deeds to merit the blessings of the goddess of light and the three churches, so I will give you a bit more kindness. Okay. I'll tell you what you want to know. Do you know Amoract?

“The great demon? He is the First Servant of the Yatan Church.”

-So, you already know.

The demon of conflict, Amoract—Grid had the experience of meeting his soul. The first time Grid lent his body to Braham, Braham visited Amoract and the pavranium received Yatan's Blessing. Grid couldn't forget the menacing presence that had emitted from just the

fragment of a soul.

-He was afraid of Marie Rose.

“Huh...?”

Marie Rose was strong enough to ignite fear in a great demon?

-One of the nine great demons who deprived Beriache of her great demon status and deported the vampire clan from hell was Amoract. Since he directly took over controlling the activities of the Yatan Church, Beriache was an obvious risk factor.

“...!” Grid recalled the contents of the conversation between Braham and Amoract. It had already been a few years, but he vaguely remembered the conversation because it had been an impressive meeting.

“You were aware that I would look for you.”

[Of course. Braham needs the blessings of the gods to

escape from his mortal body.]

“Will you give me Yatan’s Blessing?”

[That’s right.]

“Kukukuk, the Yatan Church seems to be hostile to Marie Rose.”

[God Yatan favors you, regardless of Marie Rose. Always remember this point.]

God Yatan was against Marie Rose. Braham had clearly said so. An opponent that bothered even the god of evil...

It wasn’t strange that one great demon was afraid of her.

‘Marie Rose is a much stronger presence than I expected. Amoract and Yatan gave Braham strength because they wanted Braham to keep her in check.’

Grid’s mind was elevated after realizing new facts. He felt he was getting closer to the world view, that he was

becoming a special existence. Chreshler's explanation continued.

-So, Amoract used Muller. He's good at scheming. He spread the rumor that if Marie Rose wasn't completely destroyed, she would work with the great demons to destroy humans. This reached the ears of Muller who was retired. The vampires were the main enemies of the school at the time. Muller didn't have a chance to deal with vampires and didn't understand the race called vampires. Thus, he believed the rumor and came to this place.

“It was to completely destroy Marie Rose.”

-Yes. Then he went back. I explained it well and sent him back.

“Excuse me... Your Holiness. How did Muller stay alive until then? Did he take away the lifespan of others or contract with a great demon?”

-You really don't understand legends. A legend is an existence that became a legend due to the 'feats' that they built up. Legends don't die easily as long as they aren't forgotten by people.

“...!”

A message window flashed through Grid's mind.

[A legend doesn't die easily.]

This was the moment he understood the background of the skill. Yet it raised another question. “However... Khan... was a great blacksmith that I knew couldn't overcome the limitations of life even if he became a legend. He died as soon as he became a legend. I also haven't heard that other legends have lived for hundreds of years except for Pagma.”

-He didn't build up feats that people never stopped talking about. Moreover, production classes like blacksmith are difficult to obtain the benefits of their

feats. People focus on the works they create, not the person who created them. Should I give you an example that is easy to understand? The man called the Undefeated King. He was the owner of a combat power that wasn't inferior to Sword Saint Muller and was never defeated in a solo battle. However, these activities were confined to his homeland.

“...?”

-His feats were only spoken about by his people, not the whole continent. It means his fame was weak and his status as a legend fell. He died in the hands of the Saharan Empire, but if he didn't die, he wouldn't have lived for long.

“Ah...” Grid understood somewhat. As a player, he was able to receive the benefits of immortality as soon as he became a legend, but the inhabitants of this world were different.

‘This...’

The first people Grid thought about were Piaro and Mercedes. Grid had stopped them from participating in combat as much as possible because he was afraid they would be in danger. Now it turned out not to be a wise move.

‘In order to keep them alive for a long time, it is necessary for them to engage in many battles and build up feats.’

In particular, Mercedes was the problem. Piaro’s farming could build up a certain amount of feats, but Mercedes was a knight. She was supposed to be on the battlefield to build up her feats.

“Why didn’t Pagma know about the concept of a legend? He believed that Muller was dead.”

-Even though he understood the concept, he wouldn’t have doubted Muller’s death. No legend has as many feats as Muller, and there is no precedent for a legend who has lived as long as Muller. Who would’ve imagined that

Muller would be alive for hundreds of years?I didn't imagine it until I saw him myself.

“Is Muller still alive?”

-No, Chreshler asserted, -He is dead.The world is constantly changing, and new things constantly occur.People are interested in new characters rather than praising a person who lived a long time ago. The number of times Muller was talked about decreased.

“...”Grid got goosebumps.

The formula of ‘being forgotten is true death’ was unusually cruel. He imagined Muller dying in solitude. Then Chreshler laughed. He was aware of what Grid was thinking. -Haha, it doesn't make sense to be completely forgotten just because the number of times he is talked about has decreased.Aren't we talking about Muller now? How many times have you heard Muller's story while you've been alive?

Grid had heard it dozens or hundreds of times. Yes, Muller wasn't completely forgotten nor did he die in solitude. It would be stranger if he couldn't die after being talked about for every minute and second. Muller had been lonelier and more bitter when he was alone. He would've been the happiest at the end of his life.

Chreshler's voice was mild throughout Muller's story. Even Chreshler sincerely respected Muller. Maybe it was because Muller's story made him feel better but Chreshler comforted Grid.

-The great blacksmith you mentioned. You called him 'Khan'?

"Yes... That's right."

The name 'Khan' emerged from 2nd Pope Chreshler's mouth. Grid felt somewhat overwhelmed and excited as Chreshler kindly told him, -The fact that he couldn't overcome the limitations of life means that he enjoyed his natural life. It would've been a great blessing for him

to leave when he had to leave. Imagine if he was forced to live as long as Muller. How old and lonely would he be?

“...Your Holiness is right. Khan was happy at the last minute.”

Khan had become a legend and fallen asleep in Grid's arms. He had also been reunited with his family. Yes, he would've been satisfied. He would've been happy.

‘Khan. Are you watching? Chreshler is talking about you. You have really come a long way. You must feel good.’

Grid gained consolation thanks to Chreshler and smiled warmly. Simultaneously...

[Affinity with Chreshler has increased by 10.]

An unexpected notification window popped up.

-You seem to have no concept, but your nature is good. I like it a bit.

Chreshler gave him a good (?) evaluation. Grid was happy. Chreshler might be a coffin now, but he was still one of the greatest figures in history. Grid felt reassured about gaining affinity with him.

-Now I really will go to sleep.

Grid was about to bow to Chreshler when he suddenly had another question. “He isn’t a legend. Then what is a person who has lived for hundreds of years despite humans not speaking of his feats? Is he not human in the first place?”

-You are really annoying, Chreshler grumbled. Still, he explained, -He is either non-human or a transcendent.

Transcendent...! Grandmaster Zikfrector was close to a transcendent.

“What exactly is a transcendent? How are they different from legends?”

-The thing that both legends and transcendents have in common is that they have talent that transcends the category of humans. However, legends build up a presence through their feats while transcendents only concentrate on their own discipline. They can get a long life depending on what they trained and studied.

“Is a legend better than a transcendent?”

-If it is merely a discussion on their abilities, a transcendent is generally better than a legend. The legend wanders around here and there, wasting their time on solving problems. Meanwhile, transcendents only spend time on their own development. Of course, a legend's experience is a strength, so there are many legends that are overwhelmingly stronger than transcendents. A typical example is Muller.

“...Then that means transcendents are usually selfish?”

-Who knows? Are they selfish because they don't fight for world peace or development? Don't you know? Sometimes

it isn't good to be conspicuous? Well, I'm sure they're missing some screws.

“Missing screws?”

-Most things that aren't consistent with their purpose are ignored. From a general point of view, they might seem like a person who isn't motivated or gives up easily. If it wasn't for Marie Rose, I wouldn't have received the position of 2nd Pope.

“ ... ”

Why did the grandmaster simply retreat in the evil eyes' village? One question was resolved, but Grid had a new question. Transcendent Zikfrector... Why did he serve the empire if he had no loyalty to the empire?

‘What is his purpose?’

It was uncomfortable. Grid was locked in deep thought when he saw the guild chat window. An exclamation point had popped up. It meant there was a notice.

“...!”

Grid's eyes shone as he verified the contents of the notice.

“Whose statue is this?”

Sky King Rigal occupied Bairan in less than half a day. He stood in front of a large statue in the square and cocked his head. It was the statue of a kind old man. His eyes were blazing like flames, but he had a friendly smile. The old man's hand was holding a hammer.

“My lord is asking you something!”

When no one answered, Rigal's soldiers lashed out and started beating the prisoners. The prisoners were the Overgeared soldiers who had been defeated and captured in battle. They had failed to fulfill their duty to protect Bairan and had to suffer the humiliation of being taken

prisoner. Still, they felt determined not to answer the enemy's questions, even if they were beaten to death.

Rigal scoffed, "Isn't a statue meaningless? A country with no history is putting up a statue of a fictional person?"

When Rigal touched the statue in a mocking manner, one of the prisoners roared, "Hand. Put it away. Now!"

It was an Overgeared knight bound by chains. His name was Jude. He was great in battle, and catching him had been one of the hardest challenges in this battle.

"Hrmm." A smile emerged on Rigal's face. He looked gorgeous in the air force uniform with matted silver hair and blood-like red eyes. Rigal looked favorably at Jude. "If I listen to your request, will you become my subordinate?"

Rigal coveted Jude, who was a knight with excellent physical abilities, despite his low intelligence.

Wasn't Jude a great person to have as a subordinate? An alpha dog who wouldn't bite his owner no matter what...

Jude shook his head. "Jude. Only master. Overgeared King. One minute."

Look, just like this.

"I will give you better treatment. It will be much better than the Overgeared King."

It was impossible to give better treatment than the Overgeared King. Jude could become strong thanks to Grid's efforts and attention. It was Grid who had discovered and trained his talent. If Grid hadn't made items suitable for Jude's characteristics, the current Jude wouldn't exist.

Jude existed because of Grid. Without Grid, Jude was like a flat steamed bun, an account without any balance. However, Rigal didn't know the situation. After all, he was one of the strongest powers of the Saharan Empire.

So, he believed that he had the best resources and power on the continent and was much better than the Overgeared King.

One of the Overgeared members laughed. “You don’t understand the subject.”

The youth shouting in a loud voice was Ibellin. He was in charge of Bairan on behalf of Jishuka, who was in Reidan. Ibellin had fought desperately throughout the battle but was eventually captured. He had sacrificed his life to cut down the enemies, died, resurrected, and fought again. However, Bairan was still occupied.

Ibellin couldn’t forgive himself. He cursed Rigal for trampling on Bairan’s land.

“You will give more than Grid? It is impossible even if you cut off your head and offer it...”

Ibellin’s words didn’t last long. It was because Rigal approached and cut off Ibellin’s head. Notification

windows popped up as Ibellin's vision turned gray.

[You have died.]

[You have lost 35.6% experience.]

[You have lost an additional 10% experience from the war penalty.]

[The person who killed you has applied the 'Poison to Immortal' effect. You have lost 10% more experience.]

[You have died twice in 24 hours, resulting in a restricted access penalty.]

The war penalty was expected and convincing. It wasn't unreasonable to lose experience because they were able to gain experience in the war. However, Poison to Immortals was unexpected and the worst poison. A total loss of an extra 20% experience. It was like hell.

'It is dangerous. It is really dangerous. Everyone, be careful...'

Ibellin turned to gray. Anger appeared on the faces of the Overgeared members while the soldiers and residents were terrified. Jude roared, “Kill you!”

It was a meaningless struggle. Jude’s struggle just caused the chains to become tighter. Rigal dismissed him and directly read the words on the statue.

[Bronze Statue of Khan, Legendary Blacksmith]

[A great blacksmith who dedicated his life to creating countless weapons and armor for the Overgeared Kingdom.

My teacher, friend, and family.

-Overgeared King Grid-]

“Hoh? The rumored person...”

The empire’s intelligence network was excellent. It was impossible for them to not know about Khan, who had been closest to Grid.

‘It wouldn’t be strange even if statues of him were placed all over the kingdom.’

The person called Khan had very great meaning for the Overgeared King and his people. Rigal knew this fact and ordered, “Break the statue and throw it into the river.”

“No! Don’t do it!” Jude was becoming more and more berserk. His skin that was touching the chains was red, blood flowed onto the iron, and his hair became matted. Now even the soldiers and residents felt anger instead of fear. Someone begged him not to do this, but Rigal didn’t take back the command.

As the statue crumbled, Rigal declared, “The empire will thoroughly restructure this place. All symbols of the Overgeared Kingdom will be burned, and your spirit will be trampled on. Resent being born into a powerless nation and conform to the will of power.”