

Overgeared 1211

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'Are these real clones?'

The higher the number of clones, the lower the quality of the clones. Every time a separate body was created and maintained, it would consume a lot of the caster's magic power and concentration, so it was impossible to launch tactics with the separate body.

At first glance, Hwang Gildong summoned nearly 200 clones. All the clones running toward Grid had the same appearance but their behaviors and expressions were different. At this point, it wasn't a clone but a second and third Hwang Gildong.

"Keuk!"

Grid was about to launch Storm of the Fire God, only to groan and fail. The clones that jumped out from the thick bushes behind him grabbed his cloak and limbs. This meant he missed the timing to draw a sword, let alone use a skill. Grid was disgusted as Hwang Gildong's hands came through the gaps in his armor and he shouted, "Where are you touching?"

"Uhuh! Stay still!"

"Haha! If you don't like it then hand over the black tortoise hidden in your arms!"

"My heart is wide and hard!"

Hwang Gildong's clones were even more ridiculous. They shouted different lines with different expressions. It was in real time. It was as if every clone had their own thinking ability. Grid felt more creeped out than admiration at the level of the clones he had never seen before but he tried not to show it. He snarled and pushed away the face of the clone touching his chest.

"Damn! I'm not going to stay still!"

"Haha, what are you going to do with your whole body tied up?"

The 200 Hwang Gildong who were smiling suddenly had stiff expressions. It was because they witnessed Grid's black eye shining with a strange light.

"Hrmm."

The clones who grabbed at Grid stuttered or raised their clubs. However, they didn't wield them.

"I won't allow your comfort!" Grid roared at the clones and triggered his evil eye. The only drawback to the ultimate evil eye, which blocked some of the target's beneficial effects and had a low probability of blocking all the beneficial effects, was that it was uncontrollable. Still, Grid had overcome this for a long time.

The clones could be called a collection of beneficial effects because the utilization was endless. They were also beneficial effects of a single user. This meant that no matter how many clones there were, all of them would disappear unless there were other overlapping buff skills. The concept of a clone itself meant it was a structure that couldn't cope with the evil eye. It was a mutual restraint.

All the clones in Grid's view turned into straw dolls and fell down. The 200 Hwang Gildongs quickly became one.

"Huh...?" Hwang Gildong couldn't hide his surprise and let out an exclamation. "The evil eye who makes me follow providence. It is also one of the best evil eyes in the world!"

"Hey, let go!"

Hwang Gildong's main body was the one hanging from Grid's waist. Hwang Gildong smiled as Grid pushed him away. "I heard that the evil eyes are a strange race that can't get along with anyone. Overgeared King Grid, how did you seduce the evil eyes' king?"

"Please try to guess it with your great intelligence."

"Hrmm..." Hwang Gildong's smile remained no matter how coldly he was treated. He dominated the conversation with no displeasure. "You are definitely a great talent. You proved it by resurrecting the red phoenix and returning from Chiaotzu alive."

"I wasn't fighting to show off my skills but thank you for the praise."

"You aren't trying to show off? Then why did you fight?"

"I naturally fought to resurrect the black tortoise."

"Why would you want to when you're an outsider?"

"What does my country of origin matter when helping others?"

"...In any case, you were a great help in the resurrection of the red phoenix and the black tortoise. Thank you."

"It is only half the black tortoise."

"The problem will be solved if you hand me that black tortoise. By killing the former black tortoise, the faith that is accumulated will create a complete black tortoise again while focusing on the power of water."

"The balance of the Four Auspicious Beasts will be broken! The black tortoise that has lost the power of destruction will no longer be the black tortoise!"

"Have you ever wondered how many people have been harmed by that power of destruction?"

Hwang Gildong's gaze shifted to Grid's chest. Grid was holding the black tortoise against his chest.

"The instinct of the former black tortoise who preserves nature by destroying human civilization is too extreme. It isn't practical at all just looking at the distant future. Human civilization has been destroyed many times due to the power of destruction and became stagnant. They were unable to develop and had to rely on the gods. If there wasn't the black tortoise then the yangbans wouldn't have become the object of faith."

"Did the black tortoise deliberately go out and destroy the city of humans?"

“Of course not. It is just that the small events that occurred due to the black tortoise’s existence weaved together, creating a new destiny and making humanity degenerate.”

Hwang Gildong stopped talking and stared at the black tortoise of death. It was an attitude that showed it would be faster for the black tortoise to explain rather than Hwang Gildong talking.

『 ...This is what happened. 』

The somber-looking black tortoise showed Grid one of its numerous pasts.

It was a time when the Hwan Kingdom didn’t exist. It was a time when there was a shrine dedicated to the black tortoise on the peak of Mount Baekmi. The young king of Ancient Xing climbed Mount Baekmi to receive the blessing of the black tortoise. It was to be blessed with the power of water and be energized.

However, the black tortoise breath not only had the power of water, it also had the power of destruction. The young king was affected by it and lost his armor. Then the assassins’ arrows flew and killed the young king. The sudden death of the king sparked a war in the Xing Dynasty. The royalty of Xing killed each other in order to ascend to the vacant throne and civilization degenerated for 100 years.

『 This isn’t all. The young hunter who visited with his sick mother on his back lost his bow and became tiger’s food after going down the mountain. The middle-aged general who protected Xing’s people lost his sword and armor because of me and was killed by bandits while going down the mountain. 』

The black tortoise cherished and loved all humans equally but it didn’t understand the propensity of humans to split into sides and fight. It never dreamed that its favor would lead humans to death.

『 I once saw people praying for rain and went down to the ground. it was to moisten the land that had dried after a long drought. 』

The breath of the black tortoise restored the earth. The withered grains were rejuvenated again and the people were no longer hungry. However, all the human civilization on the ground was destroyed and the people had to rebuild the city.

『 I... 』

The black tortoise, who had been communicating his thoughts directly to Grid’s mind, spoke for the first time. The moment its small mouth opened, a sad voice resonated at the scene.

『 I am useless. I shouldn’t exist. It is right. 』

The black tortoise’s voice sounded bleak. It was an emptiness that had lost its desire for life.

“.....”

Hwang Gildong’s cheerful expression darkened for the first time but it was only for a moment. Hwang Gildong quickly managed his expression and spoke to Grid, who was looking down at the black tortoise of death, “Do you see? Even the black tortoise admits it.”

At this moment...

“...No,” the silently bowing Grid opened his mouth, “there is no reason to give up your right to life just because of others.”

Strength entered Grid’s arms that were holding the black tortoise. The black tortoise saw it. Tears fell from Grid’s eyes and onto the ugly wounds carved on its back. “Your existence itself is a waste?”

Grid recalled it. He used to always walk with his head bowed. Grid recalled the past experiences where people were disgusted by him due to his inability to study, work, or do sports. Was that something he had to go through? After all, did they have the right to criticize and deny him?

“Who decides that?”

“.....”

“It is too much to blame the people’s deaths on the black tortoise. Why blame the black tortoise when they were the ones not prepared enough? What did his guards do while the king was without his armor?”

The others were also a problem. Why didn’t they keep their weapons and clothes somewhere else while they were being blessed?

“How will you defend the destruction of the city?”

“You said it resolved a drought. At that time, people knew what type of existence the black tortoise was and they called for the black tortoise by praying for rain. They were determined to make sacrifices to get what they wanted.”

“It isn’t the only time the black tortoise destroyed a city.”

“One time, ten times, or one hundred times! The people at the time were prepared and prayed first!”

“.....”

“Shit! What shameless idea is it to rely on someone else first and then drive them to death if expectations aren’t met?”

Grid stared at Hwang Gildong. Hwang Gildong was silent. His casual attitude made Grid even angrier. It felt like he was yelling at a wall.

“Once the Five Seniors invaded the land, the black tortoise risked its life and fought! It fought to protect you, even though it meant gaining a wound that would never be erased!”

“.....”

“Now the black tortoise isn’t needed so you’re going to kill it? You are going to hurt its mind and body? Are you still a person?”

Grid was really, really furious. He empathized with the heart of the black tortoise, who fought to protect its loved ones. He could see the sadness of the black tortoise who kept being denied by the people it protected. Hwang Gildong had been silent as he allowed Grid to yell to his heart’s content. Now he finally wondered, “Are you an old friend of the black tortoise?”

“Today is the first time we met!”

“I think I know how you persuaded the evil eyes’ king.”

“...?”

Hwang Gildong took off his bamboo hat. The hat was removed and a black mark on his forehead was revealed. It was such a big wound that Hwang Gildong probably would’ve died if it was one centimeter deeper.

“Overgeared King Grid, I know enough about who you are. Let’s stop now.”

“...??”

“In the rich cities, find the biggest pavilion. In the poor villages, find the smallest inn. Then ask for the cuckoo meat. The Chivalrous Robbers will help you.”

“What?”

It was all acting? To test him? Grid felt displeased rather than relieved and Hwang Gildong shook his head.

“I was serious when I wanted to kill the black tortoise but that was when it didn’t have a strong helper like you. No matter how unruly, how can I turn my back on an old god?” Hwang Gildong sank to his knees. He bowed to the black tortoise of death in Grid’s arms. “God Black Tortoise, please punish me for my disloyalty later when the Five Seniors are expelled and peace is restored to the world.”

“.....”

『.....』

Hwang Gildong got up and once again put on his bamboo hat. He approached the altar behind him and took off the amulet he had secretly installed. Then a blue-shelled black tortoise appeared on the altar. It glanced between the black tortoise of death and Grid and seemed to be deeply moved.

Hwang Gildong said he would allow the black tortoise of death and water to reunite. Then he warned Grid, “Unlike Maru, who hasn’t yet mastered the Black Tortoise Jewel, the yangban in the Pa Kingdom has completely transformed the White Tiger Spear into its own belonging.”

“Additionally, the yangban staying in Kaya and defending the Blue Dragon Dao is a monster who can embody the power of the Four Auspicious Beasts without the artifacts of the Four Gods. For now, there is absolutely no chance you can win against them. I recommend that you take a good rest and prepare for it. There is no need to fret. Due to you, the red phoenix and black tortoise have resurrected and the attitude of the Hwan Kingdom has become very careful.”

[Affinity with the leader of the Chivalrous Robbers, Hwang Gildong has increased by 20.]

[In the future, the Chivalrous Robbers will be favorable to you.]

A development that flowed the way this person wanted!

Grid was still in a perplexed state and Hwang Gildong whispered as he brushed past Grid, "Old Sword Demon is part of Kaya's Mapae but he keeps going the wrong way if left unattended. It is recommended to keep him as close as possible. He is a human who becomes stronger the more difficulties he encounters, so there is fun when training him."

Hwang Gildong took a big step and disappeared. It was different from the concept of Shunpo. His presence was completely gone with no trace of him on the horizon.

"It is Shukuchiho," Old Sword Demon approached the amazed Grid and explained. He gazed at the black tortoise of death running its cheek against Grid's chest and urged him, "Don't you have to reunite the black tortoises?"

"Ah, t-that's right. Understood."

Grid approached the altar, placed the black tortoise of death beside the black tortoise of water, and a brilliant light burst out.

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The shimmering streams of light seemed to hint at a wonderful future. They tangled together. The two black tortoises approached each other with the light as the backdrop. They touched foreheads and gazed at each other with gentle looks.

『 Thank you... 』

The black tortoises were originally one. It was natural for the black tortoise of death and water to be united again. Yet Grid somehow felt like crying. The last voice of the black tortoise of death was deeply engraved in his heart. "Remember! Don't forget that you are the most beloved and respected being in the world!"

『 ...Thank you 』

The black tortoise of death just repeated its gratitude before scattering. The remnants of the warm voice melted into the sky and earth, the rivers and seas, bringing blessings to the world.

[Black Tortoise of the Four Auspicious Beasts has succeeded in a complete resurrection!]

[★Hidden Quest ★ 'Protect the Black Tortoise' has been cleared.]

[The Black Tortoise's Shell has been acquired as a quest clear reward.]

[Affinity with the black tortoise has reached the maximum.]

Once again, the black tortoise was beautiful and holy. The scenery of the north projected in the black tortoise's blue eyes were full of abundance. The huge shell covering Mount Baekmi like a roof seemed to symbolize an umbrella that would protect the north from all types of bad karma.

"True black tortoise, don't forget..."

Grid gazed up at the distant sky and was briefly soaked in sentiment. It was only for a short time.

『 Why are you treating me like I'm gone when I'm still here? 』

The black tortoise tackled him and Grid's feelings ended. Grid coughed from embarrassment and bent over to look at the ground. The colorful flowers and trees growing to fill the plains below Mount Baekmi made him feel overwhelmed. The emotion of appreciating the better world created by his hard work was beyond description. The fact that he got a good reward was also one of the reasons for his happiness.

Grid opened the inventory and pulled out the Black Tortoise's Shell. He expected it to be a shield due to the name but he was wrong. It was a type of item that was engraved on the body, just like the Mark of Evolution made by the transcendent Sabaek.

[Black Tortoise's Shell]

[Rating: Myth

A sign inscribed with the protection of the black tortoise, one of the Four Auspicious Beasts.

300 stat points will be gained when it is attached to the body.

The user is completely immune to poison and underwater breathing is possible.

Water attribute magic and skills will gain an additional 50% damage.

Poison attribute magic and skills will gain an additional 50% damage.]

The reason why the yangbans tried to develop the mark even with the help of humans was revealed.

'They wanted to recreate it.'

It was a really unstoppable performance. Thanks to Khan's work, Valhalla, Grid was already enjoying the full effect of Immune to Ten Thousand Poisons but he didn't feel any disappointment. 300 stat points was no different from gaining 30 levels but it was surprising that even a large amount of attribute damage was added.

'It is also great to be able to breath underwater.'

It was safe to say that once the possibility of drowning was gone, his survival ability had increased. It would be much easier to act when water was the stage. The mark didn't even occupy an item slot. It was carved directly onto the body like a tattoo and was always there.

At this point, it might be the most valuable physical reward that he earned in the East Continent. Grid was looking at the shell happily only for his expression to darken. It was because stat points reminded him of the concept of level.

'It doesn't make sense no matter how I think about it.'

Grid had killed a total of 13 yangbans in Chiaotzu. He killed three yangbans almost completely alone and his contribution to the death of the other 10 was great. Putting aside the fact that Maru had self-destructed, Grid predicted that he would gain at least two levels. However, he only gained one level. Grid was now level 408. His experience bar was also only 30% full.

'It feels like the experience required doubles every time I level up...'

It wasn't an exaggeration. This was his actual experience. It was a tough game but it took ages after level 403.

'In fact, does this make sense?'

Just as he obtained the Black Tortoise's Shell, Grid had been acquiring all types of hidden pieces. Thanks to this, he surpassed his level and reached the realm of fighting and winning against the yangbans. The average player was different from Grid. The number of players who got as many hidden pieces as Grid could be counted on one hand. Even if they achieved the same level as Grid in the future, they were unlikely to win against the yangban.

'So the average player needs to improve their level to catch up with the NPCs.'

Was a player's maximum level set at 400? Was this right?

'No, it is wrong. Something is wrong.'

Even if the yangbans weren't included because their level was too high, there were many potential enemies such as the great demons, archangels, and some different species. This meant that even if players couldn't dominate the world outlook, they would need to grow to the extent where they could grasp the central position.

What if the system set a level limit? It was simply taking away the players' hopes. Countless people would feel weary and give up the game. The players becoming bottlenecked at a certain level likely wasn't the image that the S.A Group wanted.

'Perhaps I am overlooking something?'

There were two main ways to level up—hunting and quests. Of course, it was possible to level up through production but this type of benefit was only available to production class users. As the level progressed, the effect became less effective. The reality was that most players, as well as Grid, leveled up through hunting and quests.

At this moment, Grid faced the limits. This suggested only one thing.

'From here on out, there is another way to increase the level. Another means to raise my level...'

Of course, it was possible that the high experience required was only for a certain level section. After level 409 and 410, the experience required could be lowered again. However, rather than waiting for that time, it makes sense to keep the possibilities open.

'...Kraugel should've had this concern as well.'

Grid was once again burdened by being in the supreme position. As the person who was the most advanced, it was hard and lonely because he suffered difficulties that others hadn't experienced yet.

'Wait.'

What would be another way to level up? Grid was suddenly reminded of the Tower of Wisdom. Based on the name Tower of Wisdom, it should hold a lot of information and it could only be accessed by the Pioneer.

'I'm going to have to stop by the Tower of Wisdom.'

Of course, he needed a break before that. After coming to the East Continent, Grid was mentally exhausted. He wanted to confirm Braham's safety with his own eyes and to convey the Matchless Heart Technique to Piaro. Most of all, he wanted to see Irene, Lord, and Mercedes. He wanted to share a reunion with his colleagues who came back from the National Competition.

"By the way, Old Sword Demon."

"Hmm?" Old Sword Demon had been unable to take his eyes off the black tortoise as if fascinated by the black tortoise's appearance. Now he turned to Grid.

Grid didn't hesitate to get to the point. "Please come to the Overgeared Guild."

Unfortunately, the answer was as expected.

"It is a great honor that the supreme one has invited me. Unfortunately, I already have a group."

"Is it the Kaya Kingdom?"

"...That Hwang Gildong said something again."

"What is Kaya's Mapae?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't tell you yet. It isn't because I don't trust you. It is part of the rules."

"I understand." Grid nodded and pulled out a scroll to return to the West Continent. "I'll see you again next time."

"I'm sure we'll see each other again. By any means. I'll explain what Mapae [1] is at that time."

As expected, Old Sword Demon was a gentleman. The strange interpretation of his ID was because Grid's personality was rotten. Grid said goodbye to Old Sword Demon and then waved to the black tortoise.

"Take care. I was glad to meet you."

『 G-Grid. 』

"Huh?"

『 ...I hope you can come to visit me from time to time. 』

"Of course."

Grid answered with a smile and his body gradually faded. The faces of Old Sword Demon and the black tortoise were full of regret as they looked at the vacant spot left by Grid. In particular, Old Sword Demon felt like a thorn was stuck in his neck. He felt uncomfortable due to the stigma that couldn't be denied.

'Mir... wait and see.'

Old Sword Demon said goodbye to the black tortoise and descended Mount Baekmi. He regretted that he couldn't go back to Kaya and headed to the capital of Xing. Then after half a day, he realized he was

heading to Kaya and had to turn back. Old Sword Demon hadn't reached level 380 yet because he often got lost and wasted time.

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

"Huh?"

Grid shook his head as he flew through the sky and passed over the walls. It was because the average level of the soldiers guarding the gates was nearly 20 levels higher than before.

'I've only been away a bit over a month. They've leveled up so fast?'

Grid looked at the name, level, and affiliation of the Overgeared soldiers. It was using the king's basic authority. In addition to the soldiers guarding the gates, he confirmed that the guards patrolling the streets and the soldiers gathering and training in the central army had improved their levels. Thus, Grid hurried to the palace.

"Welcome."

Grid confirmed that even the levels of the royal guards had risen and questioned Lauel who had come to meet him, "You've struggled a lot while I wasn't here. By the way, Lauel, what method did you use to raise the soldiers' levels so quickly?"

Then Lauel had a strange expression.

"I actually wanted to consult with Your Majesty about this. Didn't you say last time that Sir Dante's lifespan is short?"

"I did."

"However, he is becoming more and more energetic."

"...?"

"A few days after Your Majesty went to the East Continent, he suddenly felt the amount of energy increasing. Suddenly, his bowed back straightened. The age spots covering his skin disappeared like they had been washed away."

"...??"

"Then he started to teach swordsmanship to the soldiers. Since then, the level of the soldiers rose at a ridiculous rate..."

Lauel stopped explaining. It was because Grid looked at the stairs behind Lauel's back and his eyes started shaking wildly. Looking back, Lauel saw Braham with a cast on his arm.

'Miss Ruby has healed him properly.'

It had been surprising when Braham came back with a severed arm. Grid had already died and Lauel was worried that Grid would come back disappointed.

“Braham!”

Grid ran past Lauel and jumped up to the landing of the stairs before yelling at Braham, “Dammit! Why did you stay and fight after using Meteor, breaking your arm?”

It happened when he just entered Chiaotzu Castle. Maru had mentioned the sacrifice of the silver-haired demonkin and Grid had lost his mind. Maru’s tone seemed to imply Braham’s death so Grid’s heart sank and he was distracted by his anger. Then he quickly regained his composure. Grid had a bond with Braham.

[Bond]

[A list of targets you currently have deep bonds with.

★ Piaro ★

★Braham ★

Bond Lv. 1.

All stats will increase by 3% when you are together.

Can detect if the health of the bond target is at a dangerous level.]

They were soul companions. If Braham was in a real crisis then it would be impossible that Grid didn’t know. Thus, Grid was able to shake off his worry about Braham.

Shit, dammit. Now Grid saw that Braham was wearing a cast. The legendary great magician in a cast was a ridiculous sight.

“If it isn’t healed immediately then doesn’t it mean the bones were completely crushed? No, why did you foolishly remain and fight? Am I that unreliable?”

Grid didn’t know that Braham’s arm had been horribly cut off. He hadn’t heard that Saintess Ruby had healed the arm that had been damaged to a level that couldn’t be recovered with magic power. No, he would never know this. It was because Braham had threatened them to keep quiet.

Braham wondered, “Do you think you’re reliable?”

“Ugh.”

“Don’t talk nonsense and get out of the way. I am busy.”

Braham snorted and went down the stairs. Perhaps it was due to the cast but he was uncomfortable wearing clothes, thus the sight of Braham’s naked self covered by a cloak was sensational even for another man.

“Wearing a single piece of clothing and walking around...”

The moment Grid muttered this...

“Huhuhu, it is very desirable.” At the bottom of the stairs, Lauel welcomed Braham. “Just go around the city in this state. Many children will be conceived today and it will contribute to the endless development of the Overgeared Kingdom...”

“Crazy, crazy.”

Grid shook his head and left.

He moved to the large training ground to confirm Dante’s condition and inform Piaro about his conclusion of Matchless Heart Technique.

[1] In Korean history, Mapae was also called the ‘horse requisition tablet’. Horse requisition tablets were implemented to restrict the use of horses. The number of allowed horses engraved on the tablet varied according to the ranks of those who received them and they would receive horses from stations set up by the government by showing the tablets

[Chapter 1213](#)

『 This is the end of the 5th National Competition. From the special program before the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the viewers who have been accompanying our BBD Station for a long week. 』

The quest Call of the Heavens didn’t have much repercussions. Only 11 people ignored the warnings of the S.A Group and dropped out of the National Competition. Some of them weren’t even medalists. It was difficult to make an issue about the absence of a few people when the world was shaken by the performance of Demon King Damian. Furthermore...

South Korea came first. Even without Grid, South Korea’s medals tally was far ahead of the United States and China. Most of the people in the world were busy talking about the results of the National Competition.

“This is all because of that Kraugel!”

The Chinese people booed Kraugel, who had taken China’s best gold medal chances several times.

“Lauel’s absence was regrettable...”

The Americans realized how much the person called Lauel had helped the United States. Some argued that it would be a big problem if Lauel naturalized to South Korea and the government should prevent Lauel from immigrating to South Korea. This meant that Jishuka’s performance was too great.

Incheon International Airport was paralyzed by crowds when she returned to South Korea after earning three gold medals and one silver medal, which included a team match. She had contributed greatly to South Korea’s overall ranking.

“Jishuka! Jishuka! Jishuka!”

“Player Jishuka! You have become a national hero the moment you naturalized to South Korea! Can I ask about your feelings right now?”

“In the United States, Korean food has been exposed and it became a big topic among the people. Did you find that the food also suited your taste and this allowed you to quickly adapt to Korean life?”

Most of the reporters who bombarded her with questions directly spoke Portuguese without using translators. It was intended to score points with Jishuka, a native of Brazil.

Jishuka smiled and responded in fluent Korean, “I’m happy to help Grid’s homeland. Now it is my homeland. Oh, I love Korean food. It is because my parents-in-law’s cooking skills are very good. I think my perception of Korean food has improved since I first saw it.”

“Your parents-in-law?”

“Oh my, yes. My parents-in-law. Hehe, I’m still clumsy in Korean.”

Jishuka’s shy smile caused the reporters’ faces to redden. The viewers were also enthusiastic. She was the representative of a strong woman yet she was showing a lovely face that was different from her usual image. A new charm was felt and they were once again fascinated.

The interview was proceeding in a warm manner when another protagonist appeared. It was Yura, whose white skin like a snowflake particularly stood out. The reporters welcomed her who appeared a bit later than Jishuka because it took a while to retrieve her belongings.

“Yura! You’ve worked hard this year!”

“You played alongside Jishuka and led South Korea to first place! Please tell us how you feel!”

“I hope my parents-in-law are happy.”

“Huh?”

“Ah, yes. My parents-in-law.”

Yura was smiling brightly but her eyes weren’t smiling. Her eyes seemed to be piercing the back of Jishuka’s head. Jishuka made an expression like she didn’t understand and looked around. “Do you hear a dog barking?”

“...!”

The reporters sweated as the two women engaged in a war of nerves without worrying about the hundreds of cameras. The reporters knew both Yura and Jishuka weren’t ordinary people and they were genuinely worried about Grid.

‘What if he is kidnapped and imprisoned by one of them later?’

‘Are they going to cut Grid in half and split him between them?’

‘Honestly, Grid is cheap.’

‘Grid needs to make his attitude clear so Yura and Jishuka can be happy.’

‘That dog Grid.’

Grid should choose one person. It should be quick so the one who wasn't chosen would have time to heal her wounds. However, there was clearly a problem with Grid's attitude and he enjoyed both of them for years. Honestly, it didn't look good. The world's best beauties who had both wealth and fame had met the wrong man. They felt sorry for what these women would suffer.

'Someone is cursing me again.'

Grid was crossing Reinhardt's city center. On the way to the training ground, he intended to compare Reinhardt's development with what he saw in the East Continent.

'Why do people keep swearing at me recently when I haven't done anything wrong? Tsk.'

Grid stopped in the center of the crowd and dug at his ears. Many people passed by him but didn't send him a single glance. It was due to the Hooded Zip Up. Ordinary people couldn't detect Grid's invisible state and he could freely roam the city center.

"Hrmm..."

Sure enough, the Overgeared Kingdom was a great kingdom. In less than a decade, it boasted a civilization that was equivalent to the Saharan Empire, which had ruled the West Continent for hundreds of years. The scale of the economy built up based on large arms exports made the Overgeared Kingdom stronger. Still, it was lacking. The civilizations of the Cho and Xing kingdoms were superior to the Saharan Empire. They had made great progress while being dominated by the yangbans.

'Next time, it is better to ask the Cho king about construction techniques. Hmm, I wish I had a relationship with Xing.'

He was walking with regret when he saw the scene at the big training ground. Thousands of soldiers were entering the training ground. Seeing that they were covered in dirt, they must be on their way back from farming under the guise of training.

'No, I think the effect of field work under the premise of training is very good.'

Piario's field work had a great effect. The Overgeared Kingdom was originally a new kingdom. Due to Piario's presence, the soldiers were able to raise their level to one similar to the soldiers of existing kingdoms.

'However, as the level of the soldiers increased, Piario's training effect decreased...'

There was a cap on the growth of ordinary NPCs. There was a limit to how their stats could grow. The closer the stat value was to the maximum, the more noticeably the level up speed slowed. This was why the efforts of both Piario and Asmophel didn't increase the level of the soldiers.

The soldiers of the Overgeared Kingdom had already grown near the limit. Then Dante suddenly became healthy and the level of the soldiers grew rapidly? It was hard to understand. Grid was feeling doubts when Dante emerged.

"...!"

Grid's eyes widened. He thought Lauel's words were a bit exaggerated but it wasn't an exaggeration at all. Dante was noticeably younger than he was a month ago. The wrinkles of the years still remained but the black spots symbolizing aging had disappeared and his eyes were completely clear. He looked at least 20 years younger.

'What?'

The stunned Grid brought up Dante's details.

[Name: Dante

Age: 73 Gender: Male

Race: Human

Title: Veteran

* All attacks will deal a critical hit and there is a high probability of triggering a weakness attack.

* When attacking, 30% of the target's armor is ignored and there is a low chance of disarming them.

Title: Vigorous Old Age

* Always immune to critical hits and receives damage on behalf of nearby allies. Relieves 80% of the damage done to teammates.

Level: 482

Strength: 3,490 Stamina: 1,760

Agility: 2,515 Intelligence: 1,503

Deity: 1

Skills: Empire's Swordsmanship (S), Dotage Swordsmanship (S), Bodyguard (S), Reserve Strength (SS)

The Ninth Knight of the former Red Knights—he is a power who mastered the foundations of the Empire's Swordsmanship and is a mentor to all the Red Knights.]

"...!"

Grid had felt great sadness when he first met Dante.

[★ This person's life is coming to an end.

He is a lot weaker now that he is old, but he often exhibits a surprising strength.]

These sentences that hinted at the end had filled Dante's status window. Now those sentences were nowhere to be found. Instead, the deity stat was added.

'Ah...!'

Grid noticed the reason for the incident.

[You have achieved the 'Half-God Killer' achievement!]

[The Half-God Killer achievement has increased your deity stat by one point.]

It was the effect Grid got when killing the yangban Hangeol.

['Pungsa' has caught a glimpse of you as you stand over Hangeol's corpse.]

[★ Note ★ Your knight Dante has formed a hostile relationship with the Hwan Kingdom.]

It was clear that this was also applied to Dante.

'That's right. Dante was judged to have achieved the Half-God Killer title because Pungsa misunderstood me as Dante.'

Deity referred to the dignity of a god, a divine dignity that couldn't be reached. It was extremely rare among the hidden stats and the value was overwhelmingly high. After reaching 10 points in deity, Grid became the Duke of Fire and Duke of Virtue.

'In my case, it was hard to see the effects until I had 10 points...'

Dante was a NPC. He was different from players. It could be interpreted that the existence of a god's dignity couldn't be tied to a human life span so it led to an increase in lifespan.

'...Hah.'

The thrilled Grid looked at Dante with a smile. His mind was filled with the endless possibilities of how to use the human skin mask. Dante was rearranging the ranks of the soldiers who had just returned. He made them hold their swords without giving them a break and showed a swordsmanship demonstration.

'Empire's Swordsmanship?'

Grid had killed at least a few thousand imperial soldiers. It was impossible for him to not recognize the Empire's Swordsmanship. However, as Dante's sword demonstration became longer, Grid's confidence faded.

'It is much simpler than the Empire's Swordsmanship but it feels powerful...'

It had been simplified. In fact, the soldiers were easily following Dante's movements. The momentum of the sword was considerably high. The swordsmanship that Dante conveyed to the soldiers was one pursuing the best efficiency. It happened as Grid was focused on observing.

"Sir Dante was a legend among the Red Knights. It was said that none of those taught by Dante failed to develop."

"...?!"

A calm, clear voice entered his ears. The startled Grid turned his head and saw a beautiful, white-haired knight with her unique expressionless face. It was Mercedes. The invisibility of the Hooded Zip Up was useless in front of her Keen Insight.

"I-I don't have a peeping hobby. It is just a matter of trying to move comfortably..."

Grid took off the Hooded Zip Up and added a useless explanation. He didn't want Mercedes to misunderstand. Of course, Mercedes didn't doubt Grid. No matter when, what, or where, she simply trusted and followed.

"I'm not questioning Your Majesty's conduct. I will remain silent by your side even if you peep at the women's baths."

"Why would I peep at the women's baths..."

...He never had such an idea. Should he go there later? Grid was seriously contemplating it when Mercedes gently leaned her forehead on Grid's chest.

"I'm glad you're safe, Your Majesty."

"The most useless thing in the world is worrying about me."

Grid didn't avoid Mercedes' clumsy embrace. He placed his chin on her forehead and gently patted her back. Then he saw Piaro coming over.

Grid pulled out his sword. "Piaro, Mercedes, I want to ask you guys for a duel."

Grid wanted to check the power of the Overgeared Kingdom.

[Chapter 1214](#)

"Haha."

Piaro returned with the soldiers from digging potatoes and noticed that His Majesty had returned. His fighting energy soared like it was provoking the sky. Piaro could perceive the ferocious spirit that made even Mother Nature nervous.

"Mercedes must be sad. You just embraced her only to apply for a duel."

Piaro assimilated with the wind through Natural State and ran to the training ground. He was happy to see Grid and Mercedes sharing a hug. Mercedes showed her love for the first time and rather than responding to her courage, Grid applied for a duel. Mercedes must be feeling hurt. Mercedes immediately removed the faint smile she showed to Grid and faced Piaro with an expressionless face. "We never shared a hug."

"I've already seen it."

"I was just dizzy for a moment. His Majesty supported me."

"Hehe, it is refreshing."

Mercedes didn't know that her cheeks were slightly red. Piaro smiled at the rare sight of her being distracted and knelt down in front of Grid. It was a tribute to Grid, who gave the Red Knights a second life. He was also thankful for Grid's safe return. "This Piaro eagerly welcomes Your Majesty who has returned from your exploits that threatened the skies."

"I heard you captured the Gauss Kingdom perfectly while I was away? You've really worked hard."

“This is the life Your Majesty has given me. If you hadn’t taken me away, I wouldn’t be who I am now. The only reason why I was able to win the war was due to Your Majesty’s grace, so Your Majesty shouldn’t praise me.”

“.....”

Piario was originally lacking in thought. No matter the position of the people around him, he just smiled and went his own way. It was rare for him to be so excited. Grid smiled when he saw that Piario’s always wrinkled and dirt covered clothes were ironed today. “Why does it feel like your spirit is soaring into the sky? Are you happy these days? Is it because of your wife?”

“...Hum hum, I won’t deny it. How can I not be happy when Your Majesty made me a human again and Beniyaru gave me love?” Piario frankly replied and then activated his pure energy.

The mud stuck to the hand plow and sickle were burned away by the strong pure energy. The hoes and sickle showed a sword-like sharpness that was intimidating.

“I, Piario, will accept Your Majesty’s application for a duel.”

“It is good that you’re so straightforward.”

[The duel with ‘Piario’ has started.]

[In dueling mode, no one will die even if they reach the minimum health.]

[The battle is decided the moment one side’s health reaches the minimum.]

Just as Grid had grown steadily, Piario had also grown. In particular, his Natural State had reached a deeper stage since being taught by Braham.

“The greatest strength of Natural State is the variability of energy.”

Piario engraved Braham’s teachings once again into his heart and entrusted his body to the wind. He closed his eyes and read the nature of the wind touching his skin. Then he reproduced it with pure energy.

“.....!”

“.....!”

Grid and Mercedes’ eyes widened. Piario’s pure energy, which was originally hard and sharp, changed so it was as soft as water and as flexible as the wind.

‘It is a property that can’t be broken with force.’

Mercedes looked anxiously at Grid. Piario was entering a new phase she had never seen before. Mercedes was concerned that Grid would become frustrated.

“Ah...!” Mercedes exclaimed. It was because Grid enhanced his power and speed and was rushing straight at Piario. She obviously thought that he would be swept away by Piario’s pure energy, which was like the wind itself. The same was true for others.

“His Majesty is acting recklessly.”

Dante, the white-haired knight—he didn't have Keen Insight like Mercedes but he had experience. Based on his many years of experience, he noticed that Piaro's pure energy contained a peak strength. He had come running after hearing a commotion while training the soldiers and thought that Grid would soon fall.

'His Majesty will be swept away by Piaro's pure energy and his back will touch the ground.'

Dante clenched his fists. He could feel his heart boiling. He was overwhelmed with the desire to teach Grid, who had greater possibilities than anyone else. There would be no regrets if he could give even a bit of help to his benefactor and new master.

On the other hand...

"Isn't it too early for His Majesty to compete against Piaro?"

Singled arrived at the scene after following Piaro, who had suddenly run off instead of digging for potatoes. Now he showed skepticism. He had witnessed Grid's skills many times but thought that Grid wasn't a match for Piaro. However, Hurent's thoughts were different. "We'll see. You don't know Grid very well."

"...?"

Singled cocked his head. Didn't Hurent regard Piaro almost like a god? Yet he doubted Piaro's victory? Hurent shrugged as he put down the sack of rice and sat on it. "Yes, he will be beaten by Grid."

"...?"

Just then, there was an explosion.

".....!"

The first one to be surprised was Mercedes. The moment when the airflow formed by Piaro's pure energy collided with Grid's sword, Grid's body should've been swept up in the airflow. Instead, he unexpectedly held still in the midst of the airflow.

'White Tiger's Posture!'

That's right—Grid crouched like a tiger and was rooted in the ground, similar to a giant tree. The 'immobile' effect of White Tiger's Posture was supposed to be a restraint but now it was used to support the body that should've been swept away by the air currents.

".....!"

The next one to be surprised was Dante. He didn't miss Grid staring straight at Piaro's sickle that was heading straight at him.

'He didn't avoid it?'

Reading the attack in advance but not responding meant there were probably hidden intentions. It was as expected. Piaro also seemed to notice it. However, his sickle was already aiming at Grid's brow. There was a noise like metal colliding with stone. Piaro's wrists cramped like crazy while Grid was fine despite

being struck in the forehead. He was immune because he linked White Tiger's Posture with the Rock skill.

".....!"

The last person to be surprised was Singuled. His sentiments were simple.

'A stone head...!'

A pointed sickle. Was Grid's skull hard enough to endure a sickle wielded by Piaro. Piaro kept wielding his sickle as Singuled clicked his tongue. He repeatedly stabbed at one spot as if to deny Grid's hardness. Once Grid didn't budge, he finally gave up and stepped back for a while.

'Is he immune to blades?'

Piario tried not to frown at his pained wrists. He finally showed his true skills. The First Style of Free Farming, Sowing Seeds, unfolded splendidly. Hundreds of small, round seeds were scattered around Grid. Previously, Piario had linked it with Polishing to explode it or it was planted in the ground.

Now he was able to grow plants without planting the seeds in the ground. It was due to entering the deepened phase of Natural State. The seeds he threw were already holding the pure energy of the earth. He could immediately sprout new buds even if he didn't borrow the power of the land.

"Free Farming 2nd Style! Super Growth!"

Some of the hundreds of seeds in the air around Grid sprouted and enlarged. Dozens of sweet potatoes larger than an adult man released stems that tangled together and took control of the space around Grid. Piario weaved the dozens of stems into one and started to wield it.

"Sweet Potato Battering!"

Sweet Potato Battering was one of the techniques of Free Farming and it was originally a technique that could only be used by linking Sowing Seeds, Rapid Growth, and Harvest. It was a concept where seeds were planted in the ground, the sweet potatoes grown and then harvested. Naturally, it had to go through all these steps.

Now Piario was able to grow sweet potatoes just by scattering the seeds. It was possible to start Sweet Potato Battering immediately without going through all those processes. Dozens of sweet potatoes hanging from the stems struck and devastated the land. He swung the sweet potato stem like he was determined to crush all of Grid's bones. He knew he shouldn't control his strength.

"A-Aaaaack!"

The soldiers gathered to watch the fight were flustered. Every time the stem of sweet potatoes struck the ground, the entire training ground shook and the soldiers felt dizzy.

"It might be a spar but this is too ruthless against His Majesty..."

Singuled shuddered. He saw Piario smashing the training ground and recalled memories of the past. For Piario, who usually became a demon the moment he held the sword, a spar was no different from a real battle. He was eager to fight against the strong in order to reach the realm of Sword Saint. Singuled was

someone dissatisfied with this aspect of Piaro's personality. What knight was there who would fight against his liege with all his strength?

'Did he lose his sense of chivalry after becoming a farmer?'

Meanwhile, Hurent spoke some nonsense to Singuled, "The sweet potatoes are being cooked."

"...Are you hungry?"

No, why did he suddenly talk about sweet potatoes being cooked in the middle of a serious battle? Singuled felt it was absurd only to become shocked and his nose shook. It really smelled delicious. It was the smell of delicious cooked sweet potatoes.

'What?'

Singuled started to focus on the confrontation that he knew was about to end. He captured the moment when the sweet potatoes smashing the ground appeared through the dust. Then he saw it. Piaro's sweet potatoes were all golden-brown in a cooked manner. Once the cooked sweet potatoes slammed into the ground, they were only crushed and were no longer a threat. The dust cloud gradually died down. Then—

The outline of the veiled flames started to appear little by little.

"T-This is impossible!"

How hard did Piaro wield the sweet potato that he created a huge dust cloud that managed to cover the storm of flames? The startled Singuled's vision shone red. There was a storm of flames in the landscape he was seeing. Grid stood in the center and was unscathed while Piaro had large and small burns all over his body. The confrontation that seemed to be led by Piaro was actually dominated by Grid.

"...I heard that you killed a half-god."

Piaro put down the stem of sweet potatoes he was holding and grew the seeds he planted earlier. They rapidly became watermelons. The hundreds of watermelons contained the moisture of the ground and calmed the heat of the fire storm. Grid felt admiration and spoke sincerely, "A half-god isn't a god. Most of them were weaker than you, Piaro."

"However, I'm sure there was someone who was superior to me."

A huge shadow covered the sky. It was a shadow created by a strong pure energy.

"With my lowly skills, I can only handle Your Majesty if I'm prepared for death."

A stone mortar appeared in the turbulent sky. The ultimate technique of Free Farming used to target Grid's enemies was now aimed at Grid.

"...I was looking forward to it."

Grid felt the eerie tension and used Opens Potential. Pounding Mortar had a variable where it would be a three-stage hit if a critical hit occurred. It wasn't easy to fight back so he was determined to face it with strength.

“Transcended Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle.”

Grid dominated the space.

“Pounding Mortar.”

The space dominated by Grid was crushed by Piaro.

“.....!”

“.....!”

Dante and Singuled was shocked. Mercedes clenched her hands hard and Hurent rose from his seat, once again carrying the rice sack on his shoulder.

“.....”

Grid was silently lying on the ground. He looked up at the clear sky and murmured, “Um, it is much stronger than when I used it.”

Over the past month, Piaro had grown so much. Piaro’s Pounding Mortar that contained the energy of nature far exceeded the power of Pounding Mortar that Grid had reproduced. This really...

‘...It feels good.’

Piaro’s voice was heard above the smiling Grid, “I’m ashamed of my past self who didn’t recognize Your Majesty’s capabilities.”

Piaro was also lying on the ground, his head aimed in Grid’s direction. It was a draw. If it was a real battle then both of them would’ve entered the immortal state the moment their health reached the minimum. It was unclear what variables would’ve occurred after that but at least in a duel, it was a draw.

Both of them were smiling brightly when someone came to shout at them. “Lord Piaro! You won’t receive your salary for the next seven months!”

“...!!”

It was Administrator Rabbit. The image of Piaro, who was as agitated as hearing bad news out of the blue, showed the weight of the head of a household.

[Chapter 1215](#)

‘It will be terrifying if Piaro gets the Matchless Heart Technique.’

The legends of the present generation weren’t complete. Compared to the past legends, their experiences were too little and there were many shortcomings. However, if Piaro gained the Matchless Heart Technique then he would dominate the present legends. The confident and smiling Grid recalled the battle.

‘Should I have tried to hit it back using Revolve?’

Even if the damage of Pounding Mortar came in three stages, wouldn't it be enough to counter with Revolve, Flower Revolve, and followed by Divinity to use Flower Revolve again? Grid thought about it before shaking his head.

'The motion can't handle it.'

Both Revolve and Flower Revolve were skills that needed the sword to be swung. It was physically impossible to counterattack Pounding Mortar that struck three times with no time difference. Of course, there was a prerequisite that a critical hit was required for it to hit three times and there was no guarantee that Piaro could deal a critical hit to Grid. If the goddess of luck was on Grid's side then Pounding Mortar would've only hit Grid once and he could've used a counterattack, making it easy to deal with Pounding Mortar.

However, all this needed good luck. It was no different from gambling. Grid wanted to face Piaro with his true power so it was absurd to say that he relied on gambling.

'It is a good thing that I didn't use 200,000 Army Crushing Sword.'

200,000 Army Crushing Sword crushed the target's skill. Piaro's Pounding Mortar might be one of the best techniques but it would be useless in front of 200,000 Army Crushing Sword. It was just that the risk of using 200,000 Army Crushing Sword was too great. The greater the power of the crushed skill, the greater the recoil. If Grid used it against Pounding Mortar then he would unconditionally lose 50% of his health. It was possible that he would break his arm or shoulder. It would've been difficult to handle Piaro's follow-up. The choice he made when faced with this strength was correct.

'...In reality, it would be different.'

In his immortal state, Grid had a five seconds grace period even if his health was low. If the fight against Piaro was a real battle instead of a spar, Grid would've believed in those five seconds and fought aggressively. However, Grid was more cautious than usual because sparring mode was a system that determined the outcome the moment one's health reached the minimum. It turned out that dueling mode was more realistic than reality.

'I think it is great that people fight without immortality.'

Grid understood why people who didn't have immortality were more passive in battle. Unlike himself, who believed in his immortality and displayed the temperament of winning, they had only one life and had to restrain themselves in many ways.

'If the rankers have the immortal passive then their strength should be doubled...'

Grid's mind had fallen into deep concentrating as he was recovering, only for his thoughts to be broken.

"Lord Piaro!"

Piaro was a duke of the Overgeared Kingdom. Even Grid couldn't treat him carelessly (in fact, Grid wanted to use honorifics with Piaro but stopped because Piaro was upset) and there was only one person who could yell at him. The emergence of Administration Rabbit caught Grid's eyes.

"You won't receive your salary for the next seven months!"

The Overgeared Kingdom was a centralized one. King Grid monopolized all the resources of the kingdom. Grid had entrusted the heavy responsibility of managing the national treasury to Rabbit and his authority was truly powerful.

“Excuse me, Rabbit...”

Grid was unable to turn a blind eye to Piaro and was about to earnestly ask Rabbit to withdraw his remarks when he was interrupted. He wanted to say that Rabbit was being too much. It was just that after hearing Rabbit’s words, it became difficult to speak.

“Your Majesty, please don’t defend Lord Piaro. As you can see, the training ground has been destroyed. The cost of constructing the buildings again and carrying out civil engineering is equivalent to the cost of training thousands of soldiers.”

“.....”

“To compensate for the loss, it will be necessary to raise taxes for the next two months as well as confiscating seven months of Lord Piaro’s salary. Please allow it.”

“.....”

Indeed, Rabbit was thoroughly prepared. He immediately pulled out the paperwork for the tax increase and a seal with Overgeared King Grid’s name, handing it to Grid. The bloody and sweaty Grid met Piaro’s eyes. Piaro’s eyes were different from his usual confident look. The pitiful look was like a puppy hoping for food.

Grid sighed and tore the documents. “I am responsible for the training ground’s destruction as well so I’ll be responsible. Don’t touch the taxes and Piaro’s salary.”

As Irene and Lord knew, Piaro was someone who Grid loved like family. Piaro was once a teacher and friend and was now a strong supporter after Khan’s death. He was a companion Grid wanted to be with all his life. Piaro had just started his honeymoon so Grid didn’t want him to lose his dignity and anger his wife.

Lael had also told him that there should be no tax increases for the time being. Currently, the Overgeared Kingdom imposed income taxes of 5-12% and a consumption tax of 7%. It was 30% lower than the empire’s tax rate and 30% higher than other kingdoms’. It was equivalent to maintaining a reasonable level acceptable to players. If taxes were temporarily increased then a large-scale departure might occur. The players were likely to be taken away by the empire again so the best option was for Grid to give back some of his assets to the kingdom.

“Y-Your Majesty...” Piaro was thrilled with Grid’s hard decision. It was almost equivalent to when he reconciled with Asmophel.

‘For His Majesty to do this when he considers money as precious as friendship...’

Grid desperately felt the weight of being a breadwinner and firmly gripped Piaro on the shoulder.

“Piaro, I can jump into the pit of hell for you. Please understand my heart.”

“Your royal favor is immeasurable!”

[The meaning of a bond has been recalled.]

[Your relationship with your knight 'Piaro' is strengthened.]

[Bond]

[A list of targets you currently have deep bonds with.

Bond Lv. 2.

★ Piaro ★

All stats will increase by 5% when you are together.

Can detect if the health of the bond target is at a dangerous level.

All sound transmissions (including whispers) are possible within a range of 10 kilometers.

Bond Lv. 1.

★Braham ★

All stats will increase by 3% when you are together.

Can detect if the health of the bond target is at a dangerous level.]

“.....”

As Grid himself said, the responsible for the destruction of the training ground also fell on him. No, Grid was even more responsible because he applied for a duel in the first place. However, Piaro didn't think so at all. Grid felt remorse when he saw Piaro's sincere gratitude and deeper sense of connection.

'The king should do this.'

Grid scratched his cheeks and looked around. Mercedes, Dante, the other knights, and thousands of soldiers were staring at Grid with bright expressions. The combat power that was equal to Piaro, the symbol of the Overgeared Kingdom's armed forces, and a person who considered his own subjects and people...

They were deeply moved by the real-time sight of Grid, who was a model ruler. They felt a deep affection for their king. The truth was...

[Affinity with your knight 'Dante' has increased by 20.]

[Affinity with your knight 'Singuled' has increased by 20.]

Strictly speaking, Dante and Singuled came to Grid because of Piaro. They had less direct interactions with Grid and now their attitude changed dramatically. As knights, their loyalty was high from the beginning but affinity was another concept. Thus, this was a great benefit for Grid. Mercedes opened her mouth, "Sir Rabbit, rather than asking for His Majesty's assets, confiscate my salary for the rest of my life. Won't that be enough for the recovery cost?"

[You feel a deep bond beyond liking with your knight 'Mercedes.']

[Mercedes has been added to the level 1 Bond list.]

“It is enough. Rather, it is better. Lady Mercedes’ salary is one of the top five of the kingdom so it is enough just confiscating two years...”

“Wait.” Grid sighed as he separated the talking Mercedes and Rabbit. “Mercedes, I am the one paying you. Why worry about this? Additionally, you should consider your retirement fund. How can you spend your money so recklessly? What are you going to do if you have no money in your old age and are forced onto the streets?”

“.....”

Mercedes’s serene eyes became somewhat cooler. Grid couldn’t guess the reason but other people were different. Piaro and Rabbit made sad expressions and moved back. At the same time, Mercedes pulled out the White Tiger Sword and a shield. She declared, “I will accept Your Majesty’s sparring application.”

Just like that...? Grid was exposed to Keen Insight and a chill went down his spine. His transcendent senses were warning him of danger. It was a warning that didn’t happen when he sparred with Piaro. His transcendent senses were warning him that Mercedes was stronger than Piaro.

‘What?’

Was the difference due to the Matchless Heart Technique? Or were the expectations of Mercedes’ growth higher? Mercedes was younger compared to Piaro yet she was judged to be stronger? Grid was somewhat confused by the unexpected verdict only to soon realize the answer.

It was because his combat style wasn’t very compatible with Mercedes. His attacks were blocked. The concept of speed was meaningless in front of Mercedes, who could read a person’s attack using Keen Insight and the Incomplete Predictions passive skill. In other words, it was useless even if he managed to find a gap and link sword dances. Mercedes raised her defense to the limit by activating Noble Valor and Knight’s Resolution and she even had a passive skill called Shield Block. Grid’s ruthless attack power wasn’t effective against her.

However, this was a good thing. Mercedes’ attacks also didn’t hit Grid. Mercedes had balanced stats and didn’t have explosive power like Piaro. It was the limit of Vaintz’ Swordsmanship that she had learned. The level of the Vaintz’ Swordsmanship that was passed down from generation to generation in Mercedes’ family fell far behind legendary skills.

Unlike Grid, who learned Pagma’s Swordsmanship after becoming a legend and Piaro, who created Free Farming after becoming a legend, Mercedes was more stable than aggressive and she was somewhat powerless in front of Grid’s battle endurance that defeated even a half-god.

‘The fight won’t end like this.’

It didn’t take long for Grid and Mercedes to make a decision.”

“Silver Wings.”

Silver sword energy spread like wings behind Mercedes.

“Ah...”

Grid couldn't help sighing. He felt this image of Mercedes was far more beautiful and sublime than Archangel Sariel who he once saw. Then he quickly calmed down and controlled his heart. The winged Mercedes not only had increased stats but she was also capable of incomplete flight. Additionally, she constantly released sword energy from the wings in order to deal damage to the target. If he became negligent from her beauty then he would never win.

Grid had to take the fight seriously. “Request to Stand With Me.”

[The power of Duke of Virtue is requesting help from your knight, ‘Mercedes.’]

“...!”

Mercedes' transparent blue eyes shook. She hesitated for 0.5 seconds, not knowing how to respond to her king's request to borrow Keen Insight. Then she stopped hesitating. She rebuked herself for hesitating and accepted Grid's request. The landscape that Grid could see changed.

[Mercedes is happy to respond to your request.]

[Mercedes' Keen Insight is implanted in your eyes.]

[Keen Insight has found your restrained power.]

[The effect ‘Ecstasy of Desire’ has been awakened in the Lightning Sword Born from Enlightenment and Strong Desires.]

[Your attack power will increase by three times for 20 seconds and evasion rate will reach 99%. However, defense is zero.]

Grid entrusted his body to Ecstasy of Desire and showed different movements from before. His attacks disappeared in a fast and gorgeous way and it was difficult to capture with her Incomplete Predictions. He used Keen Insight to discover and dig into the gaps in Mercedes' defense. In the end...

“...I lost.”

Mercedes suffered too much damage in 20 seconds and had to step back and concede defeat. It was a perfect victory for Grid who took advantage of the fact that Mercedes could never disobey his command. Piaro's trembling voice permeated Grid's heart as he admired his resourcefulness, “If this was the case, it would've been better to order her to surrender...”

“...!”

He had been too focused on Mercedes' strength and forgot about the nature of the spar. Grid realized his mistake and wanted to apologize.

“M-Mercedes, let's fight again.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“I-I'm sorry.”

It seemed she misunderstood that she was being teased. As Mercedes held her sword with no motivation, Grid urgently apologized and changed the topic. "Piaro and Sir Dante, I have something to say so let's go to the barracks..."

Ah, everything was broken.

"Let's go to the castle."

[Chapter 1216](#)

"Sir Dante, I'm glad you look good."

The moment Grid sat on the throne, the atmosphere of the palace turned 180 degrees. The loneliness of the throne was lifted and the space was filled with an electrifying majesty.

Dante gulped and replied politely, "According to the words of Great Sage Sticks, the atmosphere of the Overgeared Kingdom is well suited to my constitution. In particular, he diagnosed that Reinhardt's excellent water quality had a positive effect on me, who has good affinity with water."

"Is that your secret to regaining health and youth?"

Dante only met Grid at the end of his old age. He couldn't examine Grid properly because of his vision that was clouded by the years. There was a dignity contrary to his frivolous words and deed, the age hidden behind the youth, and the insight in the provocative eyes. Dante just vaguely felt that Grid was a great man without seeing anything for certain.

"To be exact, it was Your Majesty's grace. Thanks to Your Majesty's generous welcome, I was able to become a citizen of the Overgeared Kingdom."

Dante felt great when he was able to face Grid straight on because of his improved health. He was more courteous to Grid than even the old emperor that he admired. Grid nodded. "It is purely my virtue. Stick's diagnosis was wrong. If you can be rejuvenated by decades just by living in a suitable place then who in the world would become old?"

"Hum hum." The flustered Piaro coughed when Grid came out in a more pretentious manner than usual, but Grid didn't care. He was imposing because he was just telling the truth.

"However, Sir Dante, the health and youth I've given to you has a huge side effect."

"...?"

Dante and Piaro had thought Grid was half joking and were confused. They realized that their liege was serious and listened.

"The gods of the East Continent have become hostile to you."

"...!"

They were absurd words. They couldn't react quickly while Grid pulled out the skin mask and tapped the armrest. He was waiting for someone. Shortly thereafter, Sticks arrived and Grid's story began.

"...Hah."

“Such a thing!”

It was the story of how Grid killed Hangeol and was seen by Pungsa. Dante and Piaro’s expressions became serious at the encounter with a myth.

“Do you think Sir Dante will receive divine punishment?”

Sticks replied to the concerned Piaro, “No.”

Sticks was resolute. “The gods who were cast out are forgotten beings of the West Continent. Few remember and worship their myths so it is hard for them to have influence in the West Continent. As they’ve shown a few times, deceptively tempting humans to the East Continent is their limit.”

“So does that mean Sir Dante is safe if he stays in the West Continent?”

“That’s right. This incident is unconditionally beneficial to Sir Dante. You won’t be a target of the Hwan Kingdom as long as you don’t go to the East Continent. Meanwhile, you will live a long life without any disease due to the small divinity you’ve built up.”

“Ohh!”

Piaro’s face became rosy. Mercedes next to Grid was also relieved. However, Dante himself had a complicated expression. Grid read his anxiety and asked Sticks, “If Sir Dante became an object of faith, will he become a half-god like the yangbans?”

“It’s impossible. If you could become a half-god just by establishing a small amount of divinity and becoming an object of faith then the world would be filled with half-gods. They will be gods of a pseudo sect.”

“Why isn’t it possible?”

“It is a matter of birth. Unlike the yangbans who were made by a god, Sir Dante is an ordinary human being and it is hard to gain the qualification of a god. Of course, it will be a different story if he has a great power like Your Majesty or becomes the protagonist of a myth and continues to build up his status, but this is actually very difficult. Your Majesty should be very familiar with this, right?”

Sticks’ gaze on Grid was warm. His tone and honorifics were more polite than before and he seemed to have a great respect for Grid’s accomplishments. Grid nodded and turned his attention back to Dante.

“How is it? If you make achievements that become myths, you can become a half-god.”

“I am different, Your Majesty. I don’t think it is possible to build mythical achievements. I just want to be a human being. If I can live longer and a bit healthier than others... that alone is enough. No, I’m just grateful.”

Dante rose from his position and bowed to Grid. “Your Majesty, thank you. Thank you again and again... I don’t know how to repay your grace for giving me a new life after I was branded as a traitor and was living miserably.”

The Red Knights of Piaro’s era had lost everything. It was naturally the same for Dante. The empire had proclaimed Dante a traitor but his two sons, his daughter-in-laws, and his grandchildren became guilty by association and were brought to the execution ground. Dante had a new life and he felt a sense of

duty to live up to his share. He vowed that he would stay in this world and leave behind his name in the stead of his grandchildren who died before blossoming.

[Affinity with your knight 'Dante' has reached the maximum.]

[In the future, Dante will be loyal to you for the rest of his life. However, if you give the wrong command then he will tell you, even if it means risking his life.]

A veteran—apart from the fact that his stats had fallen sharply due to the relationship with lifespan, Dante had outstanding skills among the Red Knights, and he was now reborn as Grid's true knight.

Grid couldn't control his joy and tried to stay calm. He held Dante's hand and cheered before asking carefully, "Sir Dante, what is the secret behind the soldiers' fast growth? Reinhardt's soldiers have mostly grown to their limit so shouldn't they be blocked by a wall?"

There was a limit to the stats of a normal NPC. The closer they got to the limit, the slower the growth rate. This was the complete opposite of a named NPC. They were normal NPCs who grew slower than players.

Of course, just because all their stats reached the limit didn't mean they couldn't level up. They were able to level up slowly and enjoy the synergistic effect of gaining attack power, hit rate, and all types of resistances through leveling up. It was just as slow as emphasized. Yet in just one month, Dante raised the soldiers' level by an average of nearly 20.

"Limit... certainly, most of the soldiers have completed their 'body.' However, there is still a lot of room for development because their 'skill' and 'heart' are immature."

"...?"

Body, skill, heart—this was a concept that Biban emphasized. Grid thought it was a hidden system that would only be mentioned by beings who had reached a special level. Now it popped up when talking about the growth of ordinary soldiers?

Dante explained to the perplexed Grid.

"There are definitely limits as most soldiers are ordinary young people. Even though they trained their bodies to the limit, they can't lift large rocks. Additionally, they can't run for long periods of time. However, if they learn 'skill' then they can temporarily pick up a big stone and learn how to not get hurt. If they accumulate the 'heart' then they can run with all their strength for a longer period of time."

It was easy to understand. Skill literally meant technique and the heart referred to mentality.

"The thing I did was simple. I provided soldiers with a method to wield the sword with less power and taught them how to kill enemies more easily. If they are tired, I developed the tenacity to hold on for a while. It is the basics. For Reinhardt's soldiers who have already completed the 'body,' these basics play a big role. In the process of balancing the body, skill, and heart, the soldiers are able to break the wall and grow rapidly."

"Um..."

Teaching better skills and training the heart...

Dante said it easily but it was actually hard. Even Piaro and Asmophel hadn't been able to raise the soldiers so quickly. At least when it came to training soldiers, the veteran Dante's ability surpassed Piaro and Asmophel.

"Sir Dante, it is great to have you. Thanks to Sir Dante, I'm sure the Overgeared Army will be the best on the continent."

Grid didn't say anything about being the best in the world. The level of the East Continent soldiers was too high. Dante noticed this and his eyes became very passionate. "I will try to show Your Majesty a performance that is better than you expect."

He was really stubborn. Grid nodded and turned his attention to Piaro. Piaro had been looking at Grid with joy from the moment he learned of Dante's youth and health. He started talking, "In the meantime, I've taught how to identify and manage soil so that all of Reinhardt's soldiers can clear the fields anywhere..."

"Tell me once again about the origin of the Supreme Swordsmanship."

"...It was swordsmanship that passed down from generation to generation in my family. I don't know exactly how the swordsmanship was passed onto the family but we've speculated that it originated on the East Continent due to the fact that it is based on a record that no language on the West Continent can interpret."

"Then your family mastered it because you were somehow able to interpret it?"

"It is hard to be confident that I've mastered Supreme Swordsmanship. It is a swordsmanship that has been developed by the family heads interpreting the formula their own way and passing it onto future generations. It is a lot different from the original."

"Are you from the same family as Sword Saint Biban?"

"Biban? He is a completely unrelated person."

"Hmm."

He was a figure from hundreds of years ago. Even if there was a deep connection between Piaro's family and Biban, it might not be recorded for reasons or the records might be destroyed so Piaro wouldn't know about it. Grid nodded and got to the main point. "There is something called the Matchless Heart Technique. It is a technique that was created by Biban."

"Huh, it is a powerful heart skill just based on the name."

"I've learned it."

"...?"

Biban warned Grid that leaking the tower's information was a serious problem. However, Grid wasn't leaking the tower's information. He was merely leaking Biban's personal information. Even Biban himself had first leaked the information to a third party, Mercedes (although it wasn't intended by Biban).

“I will teach it to you from now on,” Grid spoke meaningfully as he alternated looking between Mercedes and Sticks.

First of all, Great Sage Sticks had passive skills in learning and education. If he had enough information then he had the ability to learn and teach it easily. Mercedes had also used Keen Insight to uncover the secret of the Matchless Heart Technique. If the two people joined forces then it wouldn't be difficult for Piaro to learn the Matchless Heart Technique.

‘Additionally, if Supreme Swordsmanship is really derived from Biban's Matchless Heart Technique then it might serve as a hint to complete Supreme Swordsmanship.’

Grid couldn't help gulping as he thought up to here. Biban was a Sword Saint and he was now active as a member of the Tower of Wisdom. How strong would Piaro become if he absorbed the power of one of the world's strongest people and sublimated it as his own. Grid got goosebumps just imagining it.

“Mercedes, from now on, cooperate with Sticks to teach Piaro the Matchless Heart Technique.”

“Yes.”

This wasn't the act of leaking the tower's secrets. It was Biban himself who took the lead to hand it over to a third person, Mercedes. It would be a ‘good deed’ to distribute the Matchless Heart Technique to more qualified people. Biban would be delighted if he knew this.

‘...Bullshit. Let's keep it a secret.’

Grid was well aware that it wasn't polite but he needed a stronger force. It was a powerful force that could be brought when he went back to the East Continent one day.

‘Biban, I'll surely repay your grace later. Phew.’

Grid controlled his mind and suddenly rose from his seat. Then he withdrew the order he just gave.

“Let's put this on hold.”

Grid was going to visit the Tower of Wisdom anyway. It was right to seek Biban's permission first. It was right to respect him and to prevent any danger in advance.

“Let's separate here.”

Take a break. Meanwhile, he would visit the Tower of Wisdom in the capacity of the Pioneer. Grid made a plan and left. His footsteps were lighter than ever as he went to visit Irene and Lord.

[Chapter 1217](#)

Reinhardt was creating the largest smithy complex on the continent. There were thousands of chimneys endlessly emitting smoke so the landscape of Reinhardt was reminiscent of England during the Industrial Revolution. However, Reinhardt had Sticks. As an elementalist, he worked with the wind elementals to purify Reinhardt's air. Therefore, Reinhardt's air and sky were always clear.

“This is what Yang Fei said...”

A golden wheat field stretching out under the blue sky.

The smile didn't leave Irene's face as she walked with Grid along a picturesque landscape. She talked about what happened while Grid was away and seemed happier than anyone else in the world.

'How can she be so good?'

She must be lonely but Irene only talked about happy things. This nature once again touched Grid's heart. Lord being 13 years old now proved the passage of time. It was worrying that Irene carried this alone and tried hard not to express her anxiety and sadness to Grid.

'She is crying alone in places I can't see.'

Irene was strong. She was a mother and a queen, after all. However, she had been kidnapped by the Yatan Church and she was particularly vulnerable to loneliness and anxiety.

"....."

Irene suddenly turned her head toward Grid. She noticed that Grid's gaze was on the faint wrinkles around her eyes. She covered her eyes with an embarrassed expression only for Grid to hold her chin and turn her head. Then he caressed her wrinkles and pledged, "We will live the same amount of years."

"Your Majesty...?"

"I won't make you lonely."

Berith's Skin Mask still had eight durability left. This meant that there were at least eight chances to give Irene divinity. Irene would surely build up her own divinity. The determined Grid shared a deep hug with Irene.

"Wow. I don't know whose son you are but you're really amazing."

It was after splitting up with Irene, who decided to participate in a Rebecca Church event. Grid came to the training center to meet Lord and clicked his tongue. Lord will be 14 years old in a few months' time and his status window wasn't normal.

In addition to expanding his basic combat skills such as swordsmanship, archery, spearmanship, and body skills, the proficiency of special skills such as Daluka's Methods, the elven racial skills, and Lantier's Methods had increased significantly. He even increased the levels of passive skills such as Insight and Wise Man's Wisdom, where experience played an important role.

The knowledge stat, Irene's excellent discipline, and Sticks' teachings seemed to have played a big role.

'By the way, why did the rank of the Overwhelming Charm skill rise?'

Charm was a concept that could be acquired. People tried to raise their own charm by correcting their words, controlling their emotions, and dressing up their appearance. However, Lord's Overwhelming Charm wasn't ordinary. The basic rating was S rated and it was a skill, not a stat. The S rating meant that men, women, the old, and the young all had good feelings toward him, but it wasn't good news if it reached the SS rating.

"What if he gets kidnapped?"

Grid was genuinely worried about this when someone emerged from Lord's shadow. It was the appearance of Faker, who now handled shadows as skillfully as Kasim.

"Don't worry, Lord's side is guarded by the Overgeared Shadows."

Faker had been solely focused on his training and the protection of the Overgeared Kingdom. He had mastered the essence of Lantier and was growing rapidly, making him the final weapon of the Overgeared Kingdom. Grid was the only one in the Overgeared Guild with better personal skills than Faker. Grid was relieved that Faker was by Lord's side and told him, "Thank you for everything."

"It is a role that I took on myself."

'I'd rather thank you for trusting me and leaving this to me...'

Faker wanted to add this but he was embarrassed. He remained silent and hid in the shadows again.

'I'm going to have to quickly make Faker a Blue Dragon Set with the Blue Dragon's Breaths I gained from the East Continent.'

Grid promised and soon ran eagerly with Lord on his shoulders. He smiled as he headed to the dining room. Yet what was this strange feeling?

"Then Aunt Sua told me."

"Aunt Sua said."

"Aunt Sua..."

...It was always Sua.

No way, right? Grid prayed this wasn't the case. Then after the meal, Grid visited the smithy with Lord for the first time in ages. He used Open Potential and showed off his god-like blacksmithing skills, inspiring the blacksmiths and making Lord proud. The owner of the Blue Dragon Set made on this day was Faker.

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"As expected..."

Grid's desire to own Berith's Skin Mask forever was enlarged after learning how to take advantage of it. He wanted to get rid of the 'not repairable' penalty of the skin mask. However, even Sticks and Braham couldn't give any suggestions to Grid. In the end, Grid pestered the leather craftsmen scattered all over the kingdom.

The result was terrible. The conversation with the craftsmen that Lauel gathered wasn't helpful at all. They didn't dare do anything to the work of the great demon that was made of human skin.

'I have to use it with caution.'

Grid got up from his seat. Only five days after returning home, he was about to leave again. He had even been working for the past five days. He hadn't been able to rest at all because he had been making items for the Overgeared members using the breaths they gained from the National Competition.

Thus, Lael wanted to encourage Grid to rest a few days. He wanted to persuade Grid to take a tour of their newly conquered territories. It was impossible not to know that Lael was taking care of him and Grid smiled.

"I will examine the new territories when I come back. I'm sorry this time. As you know, I'm too busy."

The public sentiment of the old Gauss Kingdom hadn't reached the highest level. The Overgeared members and Asmophel tried but it was confusing because the new king had never shown his face. Of course, Grid knew the situation and intended to visit them. If a city's public sentiment was high then the resources and population productivity would increase.

"I understand. I hope you will be able to solve your leveling up problem and come back."

"Goodbye, Father."

"I've baked some sweets. Take them when you're hungry."

"May you be incomparably daring."

"I'm going."

Grid left the palace after saying goodbye to his family and friends. Then he saw unexpected figures waiting for him.

"You are going on an adventure again straight away?"

The heroes of the National Competition, the ones who made Korean ranked first without Grid. They were Jishuka and Yura. They immediately ran over when they heard Grid was leaving.

"We'll go with you."

They had experienced firsthand the strength of the yangbans. They had witnessed that the level of the enemy had risen to the point where Grid alone couldn't handle and was unwilling to let him go alone. They were confident that they would no longer hold back Grid.

However, Grid shook his head. He appreciated their hearts and their strength was also of great use but the destination this time was the Tower of Wisdom. It was a place only the Pioneer was allowed to visit and he couldn't take any colleagues with him.

Yura nodded while Jishuka trembled.

"It is a place where only the first ranked player can go? Ohh, I'm envious."

Jishuka's dream hadn't changed. Setting aside her love for Grid, she still had the ambition to be the best. The best ideal for her was to become the supreme one and make Grid depend on her. She wanted to keep Grid to sit on her lap and...

"...Hum hum."

Jishuka blushed as her mind started flowing in the wrong direction. Then she declared with a polite smile. "Sooner or later, I'll take the number one ranking and monopolize what's in the tower. Grid, you're only sucking up the honey until that time."

"Haha, yes..."

The qualification to be the next Pioneer was to reach level 500 first, not to be first in the ranking. However, Grid didn't want to tackle the highly motivated Jishuka and left. Soon after, Yura was left alone with Jishuka and stared. "You will be ranked number one before me?"

"I'm going to eat soybean stew at Grid's house this evening."

"...You are only living next door. Don't you go there too often?"

"Yes~ I had pork belly last night..."

Jishuka was no longer teasing. Yura loaded her gun with magic bullets and pointed it at Jishuka. Jishuka stuttered, "W-What? If you feel it is unfair then move next door to Grid's house! Where in the world is there a crazy X who will start shooting straight away...? Kyaack!"

"Wow, that runaway train is struck."

The Overgeared members clicked their tongue when they found the prideful Jishuka running away from the silently chasing Yura. Of course, the ones the previous Tzedakah members were calling a runaway train was Jishuka. The Jishuka they knew was someone who had no fear in the world. It was amazing to see her running away from Yura. Well, it didn't seem surprising considering that Yura's nickname was 'witch'...

"Grid, don't die."

They felt sorry for Grid who was walking on a tightrope among the scariest women in the world.

Hera hugged the medicine made from the Kunlun Ginseng in her arms and entered the quiet village. The name of the village was Lanteto. It was the place where her client who asked her to save his son lived.

'Is there fog all year round?'

Just like when she visited half a year ago, the houses were covered by fog. There was still no sign of life. No one was present.

"Uhh..."

Hera was surprised by the sound of a bat passing by and cried out. She felt like the main character in a horror movie. The scenery of this small village was strange and scary. Even so, Hera didn't stop moving. The castle that existed beyond the fog entered her vision and she firmly stepped forward. There was a patient who needed her help.

"Hup!"

Hera barely climbed the hill and arrived before the castle. Then she took in a breath and froze in shock. She didn't know how but the door automatically opened. The sound of the old hinges creeped Hera out even more and then the client appeared.

"Medicine... have you obtained it?"

There was a white, pale face. It was so transparent that it was hard to read the emotions. The client didn't look like a human but a vampire depicted in movies. It seemed that pointed fangs would be revealed when he opened his mouth. If this place was near the Overgeared Kingdom then she would be certain he was a vampire.

Fortunately, it was more than 1,000 miles away from the Overgeared Kingdom and the client's teeth weren't sharp. Yes, this was a human. It was a father who became haggard to protect his dying son.

"Yes, I've acquired it. It will definitely work."

"Ohh... Come on in."

Hera followed the client up to the second floor. The client's footsteps were very fast like he was happy to be able to save his son. It was almost a run. Hera opened her mouth, "I wanted to prepare an amount that could be taken multiple times, just as you said. However, the Kunlun Ginseng is precious so I could only prepare two."

Hera didn't delay after arriving in the patient's room. She took out the medicine and poured it into the mouth of the sleeping boy. Then—

The boy's heart, which seemed stationary, started thumping and it echoed through the room. The client became fevered. "Sob...!Sob sob sob! Finally...! I'm finally free!!"

"...?"

Free? The word was somewhat strange. Hera was feeling a sense of strangeness when a dismal voice was heard in her ears. "I didn't expect it to give life to a lich. The rumor that it could even save a jiangshi was real."

"...!"

Hera turned her head and was astonished. A skinny man with green hair...

A person that any player would know was approaching her. There was a flash of gold under his disheveled hair like he was annoyed by the client sobbing about his liberation.

"Give me the rest of the medicine."

"Agnus!"

[Chapter 1218](#)

"Agnus!"

He was a person always mentioned when discussing the top 10 strongest people, not the top 100. It was Agnus. He was one of the strongest people in Satisfy who could stand shoulder to shoulder with the supreme Grid and Sword Saint Kraugel.

“Why are you stupidly staring? Don’t bother me. Take out the medicine and get lost.”

No, it was more appropriate to say he was the worst rather than the best. The doctor Hera couldn’t fight and she had little interest in it, but Agnus was infamous. He was a villain who casually did unethical events such as killing all players he encountered at a hunting ground, monopolizing hunting grounds, or annihilating NPCs to turn them into skeleton soldiers. Recently, she had rumors that he was involved with the great demons who were humanity’s greatest evil. To be honest, he was a big character in the world and she only heard nasty rumors about him.

Gulp.

Hera swallowed her saliva and felt creeped out by Agnus’ empty gold eyes. Her limbs trembled. This was real fear. It wasn’t just caused by Agnus. Agnus was the contractor of the 1st Great Demon Baal and a noble of the demon world. He developed a skill that paralyzed those with a lower than him with fear.

It happened as Agnus and Hera were facing each other.

“Hahat! Hahahat! Goodbye! Goodbye to this damn life!” The client who had been sobbing about his liberation suddenly laughed and rose from his seat. He didn’t even look at Agnus who kicked him as he shouted at the boy in the bed. “Pauld [1]! Come and release the shackles on me! Reward me for serving only you for 31 years with my freedom!”

‘31 years?’

He was talking about 31 years to a boy who seemed to be less than 15 years old? It was bizarre in many ways. Hera felt something ominous and stepped back. The boy lying like the dead on his bed opened his eyes. Dark eyes stared at the ceiling out of pale skin that didn’t seem to see the sun once in his life.

“...Good.”

The boy spoke with a satisfied expression and slowly raised his body at a right angle. As he floated up and approached the chandelier, he looked around.

“Light. I can move just like I did in my human days. The energy of the Kunlun Ginseng replaces blood and injects vitality into the exhausted organs.”

‘Human days?’

Was this boy really a lich? Hera’s trembling gaze turned to Agnus. It was a sign to resolve this question. However, Agnus thought of Hera as a rabbit who could be caught at any time. His dead eyes shone as he stared at the boy floating in the air. Then he asked, “Is that true? You seem to have become a human?”

“Most of my senses have returned. It is just that I need to continue to consume the Kunlun Ginseng to maintain this state. By the way...” The boy explained kindly and slowly turned his head. His name, that was hidden in the shadows, was clearly revealed as ‘Pauld.’ “Who are you?”

“I-I’m a doctor who made the medicine...” Hera was scared by the golden name and answered reflexively.

“Then come and vomit up the medicine you just took.” Agnus’ expression never changed as he ordered with strange eyes.

Pauld doubted his ears. “Vomit up the medicine? Is my hearing function impaired? I don’t think I made a mistake with the preservation magic.”

“P-Pauld! Release my shackles first...!”

“Maintain your dignity, Haltez. You might be a villain who slaughtered thousands of people but your root is a magician. Reason and calmness are virtues and pride that magicians shouldn’t forget.”

“Y-Yes... I-I’m sorry.”

Pauld asked, “So what is the identity of this man?”

“U-Um? I-I don’t know either. What are you?”

‘Brainwashing magic?’

Pauld found that his body wasn’t in perfect condition and gazed at Agnus with profound eyes. At the same time, notification windows emerged in front of Agnus.

[The magic of Great Magician Pauld is contemplating you.]

[Your intelligence and mana values will be revealed to Pauld.]

[Pauld’s artifact ‘Eyes of Absurdity’ is contemplating you.]

[Some of your stats and skills are forcibly revealed to Pauld.]

Pauld’s eyes widened. “Baal’s Contractor?”

Pauld was a great magician who was active in Braham’s era. He was the eternal second person, the unfortunate genius who had never crossed the high wall that was the legendary genius Braham. He had been the object of sympathy for the people of his era. Now hundreds of years later, he was considered one of the greatest magicians of all time. It was because the artifacts he created assisted in developing a brilliant civilization that benefited humanity. Many of the so-called peerless inventions were born from Pauld’s hands.

“How surprising... I have been acting so carefully yet my trail was caught...”

There was an essential step when magicians turned themselves into a lich. It decayed the body, leaving only the mana core and white bones behind. It was a type of ritual for abandoning the body. In order to be reborn as a mental form, there was no need to obsess over the body that would decay after some time. Preservation magic could prevent the body from decaying but why bother?

In order to maintain the preservation magic, blood must be drained from the body and mana injected to maintain the form of the body. In addition to having to endure extreme pain, a huge amount of mana was consumed. This meant there were great limitations to the study of magic.

They were giving up being human to pursue the ultimate magic so it was a penalty for no reason. For them, the body was a cumbersome obstacle and could be discarded without any regret.

However, Pauld's case was a bit unusual.

The reason he became a lich was because he wanted to see the future.

How would his tools be used in the future? Would his descendants understand his intentions? Perhaps it would show a new interpretation that went beyond his intentions?

Pauld prided himself on his inventions and just wanted to know this.

Thus, he became a lich and used mana and mental strength to preserve his body. In the past hundreds of years, he didn't develop and just periodically opened his eyes to change his bed. In addition, whenever he changed his bed, he obtained a servant to manage himself. He put shackles on the servant and gave them the manufacturing method for the Kunlun Ginseng medicine.

Then today, Pauld was finally freed from the preservation magic. In the future, there would be no constant consumption of mana and the need for sleep to slow down the mana consumption. The lich was now a human and could walk the world with confidence. It was time to relax and appreciate the future of his works. Yes, he finally achieved his goal. Then he saw Baal's Contractor right away?

Pauld observed that Agnus had the Rune of Death that influenced the dead and spoke cautiously to Agnus, "Tell me exactly what you want. Do you just want the Kunlun ginseng or is your ultimate goal to collect me?"

"Give me the Kunlun Ginseng. That's it."

[Baal's devoted retainer, 'Cepardea,' is furious.]

-I'm furious! Didn't I ask you to collect Pauld?

"I don't care about that."

Agnus flicked away the small frog sitting on his shoulder. Agnus currently has an ongoing quest called 'Collect Lich Pauld.' It was a quest he didn't even think about. Agnus didn't have enough time to spend with his lover Luna. Then he heard the story of the Kunlun Ginseng and couldn't stand by. Therefore, he visited this place and faced this situation.

"I don't care about you. Just give me the medicine!" Agnus felt impatient when Pauld didn't answer and raised his voice. Perhaps it was a habit when excited but he didn't like the way this person shook while his lips were curved up.

Pauld explained, "The medicine I've taken has already been completely absorbed by me. I can only give you the medicine I haven't taken yet."

"Klkik! If I split open your stomach and search through it, I can find the residual medicine! Just search!"

"Kyaak!" Hera screamed as Agnus summoned a death knight.

On the other hand, Pauld was calm. “I don’t know what you’re trying to resurrect but even if you cut open my stomach and steal my medicine, it will be an inadequate amount. Both you and I need more medicine.”

“...”

“How about it? I will hand over the medicine recipe. Then won’t you go to the East Continent?”

Incomplete beings were easy to handle. His servant Haltez proved it. Pauld had confidence that he could control Agnus. It was a mistake that occurred because he believed Agnus had a sense of reason.

“Won’t you drop the recipe if I kill you?”

“...?”

“I’ll kill you and scour your corpse. Kukuk.”

“....!”

Pauld’s body was thrown out of the exploding castle wall. He hurriedly deployed a shield to block the death knight’s attack only to be shocked. It was due to the rainbow magic power that was exploding from the castle.

“M-Mumud?”

“Um...”

It was a dedicated hunting ground for the first ranked player. This was how he explained it to Jishuka. Grid finally visited the Tower of Wisdom and checked his condition before entering the tower. Greed—to be precise, he took off all the items made from the insane dragon iron. Today, Grid was wearing all the items in the pre Blue Dragon’s Boots period. One side of his inventory contained several pieces of insane dragon iron.

‘Good.’

[Tower’s Mission]

[★ Hidden Quest ★]

The Tower of Wisdom is a hidden organization that fights for the peace of the world.

Their main role is to curb the scourge of dragons.

Please cooperate with the tower to find the owner of the insane dragon iron!

Quest Acceptance Reward: 1,000 gold. 20 top-grade buff potions.

Quest Clear Condition: Take away the insane dragon iron from its master or kill the master of the insane dragon iron.

Quest Clear Reward: Dragon Scale (random attribute)]

The tower that protected the world from dragons. The insane dragon iron was something that made even these great transcendents express displeasure. From Grid's standpoint, this quest was as easy to clear as eating porridge. Grid himself was the owner of the insane dragon iron.

'Given the performance of a dragon scale, would it be better to add it as a material when creating a new mineral with Braham?'

Of course, there was the thrill he got from clearing a quest. The smiling Grid finally entered the tower.

[You have visited the Tower of Wisdom in the capacity of the Pioneer.]

[This is the first floor.]

'Why is it so dark?'

The size of the tower was enormous from the outside. In order to preserve the bodies of the hunted dragons, the land area was larger than the imperial castle and the height was enough to penetrate the sky. Therefore, Grid expected the interior of the tower to be magnificent and spectacular. He also had the expectation that his Discerning Eye skill might receive enlightenment. Yet when he actually entered the tower, only darkness awaited him. He couldn't see anything in front of him despite his transcendent senses.

"Welcome."

After a while, Grid slowly adjusted to the darkness. A friendly woman's voice echoed and the interior unfolded in Grid's vision. He saw an immeasurably huge plain.

"Prove your credentials as the Pioneer. First, let's test your body."

[All items, skills, and magic are prohibited.]

"Reach the second floor. The time limit is five hours."

"...?"

No, dammit. They didn't even show their faces when a guest came. They were going to test their benefactor (?) who entered after clearing their quest (?). Grid found it unpleasant but started running. He didn't have the guts to refuse the Tower of Wisdom's test.

'Damn, when did I become such an obedient person?'

By the way, why was the time limit five hours? Less than an hour later, Grid found the stairs leading to the second floor. He stood in front of the stairs and asked, "Isn't this the way to the second floor?"

"..."

"Excuse me? Is anybody there?"

"..."

[Chapter 1219](#)

"His mental strength is very high."

“Um...”

The members of the Tower of Wisdom were beings who lived in the past. They disappeared into history. If they interacted with the present then various problems would occur. First of all, they had to be objective beings and couldn't be bound by worldly concepts, such as the homeland and blood. This was why the Tower of Wisdom isolated itself. The Tower of Wisdom must preserve perfect independence in order to achieve their sublime goal of maintaining the peace of the world. Thus, they never exposed themselves to people of the world.

The sheer size of the Tower of Wisdom that Grid witnessed at the entrance was only an illusion. It was natural. How could such a large tower be a secret?

The problem was that Grid recognized the size of the tower as 'large.' The illusion that Grid witnessed was embedded in his mind. A dragon's heart that acted as the tower's energy source and the great magician's magic arrays materialized the idea, so that the scale of the tower that Grid felt was tens of thousands of times larger than its actual size. It was only normal for Grid to feel fear after he realized the scale of the 'endless dark plains' and the 'infinitely rising staircase' becoming a reality.

However, Grid wasn't afraid. He ran silently rather than shrinking back, even when he saw the endless plains in front of him. He seemed to be convinced that he could reach the end of the plains. His strong spirit slowly shattered the tower's welcome. Rather than expanding the size of the plains and the stairs, they were scaled down to what they actually were.

This was the secret that allowed him to break through the space that he could've wandered in forever in just one hour, not five hours.

“It is the first time since Biban that the first floor has been broken through in such a way.”

The illusion magic that covered the Tower of Wisdom used a dragon's heart as a resource. It was normal for Grid to not notice it since it had absolute power. However, if Grid's wisdom was excellent then he would've doubted the scale of the tower. The question 'the Tower of Wisdom can't be so huge?' would shrink the scale of the tower he experienced. Yet Grid believed in the size of the tower that he saw and encountered the endless plains. It was the first time since Biban that there had been such a dumb visitor.

“Yes, everyone else easily broke through the first floor without any trouble. Even Kraugel, the former Pioneer.”

“It is a bit disappointing. Still, thanks to it, I was able to see both the 'body' and the 'heart,' saving time. Skip the second floor and go directly to the third floor.”

“Yes.”

The woman nodded and activated the communicator.

“Congratulations on passing the first and second tests. Go to the third floor immediately. I will confirm your skill.”

“Congratulations on passing the first and second tests. Go to the third floor immediately. I will confirm your skill.”

The woman’s voice was so clear it was like she was next to Grid. Her voice repeatedly echoed in Grid’s head once he reached the second floor and stopped. It was only one part.

Congratulations on passing the first and second tests. Congratulations on passing the first and second tests. Congratulations on passing the first and second tests...

“...Heh.”

Grid felt dazed for a while before sweeping back his hair. His head slightly cocked and there was a big smile on his face that was reminiscent of Lauel in his chuuni state.

“I must’ve proven my skills properly without my knowledge.”

There was only one thing Grid had done. It was breaking through the first floor. Yet the guide announced that Grid had already passed the second test. It was a good situation that Grid misunderstood. He got the illusion that his skills were so good that he made the second test meaningless. In fact, due to the lack of wisdom, his ‘heart’ was proven in the first test so the necessity of the second test disappeared... it wasn’t a big misunderstanding since he had proven himself capable.

“It was worth going to the East Continent. Huhut.”

He didn’t express it but Grid had actually been rather tense. Beings who fought dragons. The Tower of Wisdom was filled with powerful people like Biban, who was an absolute being to Grid. Therefore, he thought it was a very special place and he thought the difficulty of the tests would be quite high. Now it was worth doing. Well, it wasn’t to become a member of the tower. He just needed to prove his qualifications as the Pioneer. It would be better to relax.

Grid reached the third floor and looked around at the surrounding landscape. It was amazing. The first floor was a huge space that was difficult to measure while the second and third floors were very ordinary. The area was only 50 square meters and the ceiling was high, making it feel like the attic of a castle.

‘Are the second and third floors divided into several compartments?’

In Grid’s field of view, the notification windows were being updated sequentially.

[The use of skills and magic is once again possible.]

[All your items, such as equipment and consumables, are prohibited.]

[Your stats are adjusted to prepare for accidents.]

[Strength, stamina, agility, and intelligence have been lowered to 300 points each.]

[The golden ratio effect of strength and agility will be removed.]

‘Indeed...’

Shortly after confirming the golden ratio of strength and agility, Grid had a strange suspicion. Why was the golden ratio of these stats unknown? Stats changed in real time due to various factors but it was easy to match the ratio of strength and agility to 1:1, especially in low level sections. Out of two billion users, there must've been tens of millions of users who achieved a 1:1 ratio of strength and agility. Yet there were no rumors, let alone information about the golden ratio?

Grid guessed there were two reasons for this. First, the golden ratio of the stats depended on the level interval. For example, even if the stats ratio was the same, the golden ratio wouldn't occur in the level 200 section. It would only occur in the level 300 or 400 section.

Second, the golden ratio of the stats was affected by the numerical value of the stats. The golden ratio wouldn't occur below 1000 points. It would only occur when it was above 2000 or even 3000 points. It was hard to understand why the golden ratio wasn't known unless there was such a variable. Now it seemed the golden ratio was affected by the number of the stats. It was as expected.

'This means that when the stats become higher, I'll have to find a new golden ratio... well, it will work out somehow.'

It was a waste of energy to worry about the future ahead of time when he didn't know when it was coming. Grid emerged from his thoughts and looked at the shelves that appeared in front of him. There were dozens of weapons laid out on the shelves, including swords, knives, spears, bows and arrows, blunt weapons, nunchucks, etc.

The guide's voice was heard. "Please choose the weapons you want to use."

'I don't know.'

After a moment of contemplation, Grid picked up a sword, a spear, and a bow and some arrows. The guide didn't question him. It was because the tower was full of masters who handled dozens of weapons perfectly. Grid's three types of weapons weren't unusual or great.

"The third test will begin."

The ceiling opened with a signal from the guide and a man dropped down from the opening and landed before Grid. It was a middle-aged man with a beard that went down to his chest. He had straight eyebrows, clear eyes, modest attire and an upright posture. The overall impression was of a famous scholar. He wasn't holding any weapons. "Pioneer Grid, it is nice to see you. It is the first time I've seen you but you don't seem like a stranger at all."

"...?"

Not a stranger? What magic had he been using to observe Grid?

'They've already figured out about the insane dragon iron?'

Would the insane dragon iron reclamation quest be for naught? What if Greed was reclaimed?

"For the past few months, I've heard your name every time I've gone to the toilet."

"Huh? The toilet?"

The man introduced himself to the baffled Grid. "There was a good reason for it. Hmm, let's start the test. My name is Abellio. I am the seventh seat of the tower who painted the world with a brush."

"...?"

Drawing the world with a brush? Grid inferred Abellio's job. Abellio spread out drawing paper, pulled out a brush and placed paint on it.

'A painter!'

There was no distinction between classes. Grid had grasped the power of a painter from Picasso and nervously raised his wooden sword. Abellio drew a dot on the paper and stroked his beard with a laugh. "I don't want to hurt you so please relax. It is your prerogative to attack and I will only stop it. So rest assured and focus."

It was an extremely friendly tone. Certainly, the members of the tower respected Pioneer Grid. Grid nodded and relaxed his tension.

"Then I will start."

Slow. Grid's perception exceeded the speed of his body because his stats were nearly 10 times lower. There was the feeling of shackles all over his body. Grid wanted to get away from this frustration quickly. "Link!"

It went from Pagma's Swordsmanship, Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship, and then Grid's Swordsmanship. As the swordsmanship progressed, Link also changed. Link was no longer bound by the concept of speed. No matter Grid's agility, it unconditionally fired 20 energy blades per second.

Grid, who ran slowly, suddenly accelerated and Abellio caught sight of his swinging sword.

"It is okay."

Abellio moved his brush. He covered the paper with paint and exactly 20 lines were drawn. At the same time, the 20 lines protruded from the drawing paper and blocked all of Grid's 20 energy blades. Grid's eyes widened. It was the ability to place intent into a painting and materialize it. It was amazing that an artist's ability had unlimited possibilities, reminiscent of Aura Master Hurent.

Abellio was also astonished. Grid didn't notice it but Abellio's head had moved around a centimeter. It was intended to avoid the wind blades caused by Grid's attack.

'It isn't just at a good level. It is very good. There was a reason Biban was happy every time he talked about this person.'

Abellio responded after reading with his eyes that Grid swung the sword exactly 20 times in one second. Then he realized that he didn't have a proper understanding of Grid. The fact that he could've been cut on the cheeks by the wind blades made him alert. Grid used Drop after that. He had no intention of missing out on the gap that had been dug using Link.

Abellio hastily drew a 'line' on the paper to block Drop.

".....!"

No matter how much lower Grid's agility had become, Abellio still shouldn't have been able to respond? The flustered Grid couldn't imagine what would've happened if his sword dances didn't contain Braham's magic. In other words, if Wind Cutter hadn't occurred due to Link then Abellio wouldn't have become serious and his reaction to Drop would've been somewhat delayed. Then his hair could've been cut.

However, Abellio was wary after Wind Cutter. He appreciated Grid and did his best. "This is also a good attack."

The 'good' rating was the best assessment Abellio could make. It was virtually impossible to praise a young junior who had been a legend for less than 20 years.

"Wave!"

"Not bad."

"Kill!"

"It is okay."

"Pinnacle!"

"Good."

"Flower!"

"This is disappointing."

"Transcended Link Flower!"

"...Hum?"

"Linked Kill Flower Pinnacle!"

"Fairly good...!"

Abellio's eyes widened as he stood comfortably painting on the paper and evaluating Grid. For the first time, he couldn't hide his agitation. He was threatened by the beautiful backdrop created by countless petals and reflexively painted the world. The paint filling the buckets were thrown into the air and covered up the landscape created by Grid.

[Linked Kill Flower Pinnacle has been extinguished.]

'What?'

The four fusion sword dance that was linked to Transcended Link Flower was neutralized without having any effect? Grid was astonished while Abellio gave a new assessment, "Great..."

It was praise. Abellio himself never imagined that he would make such an assessment. He gazed at Grid with anticipation but Grid wasn't satisfied. Paint was thrown and his one of his ultimate attacks erased, but it was only great?

'Are you kidding me?!'

Grid used Open Potential. He wanted to hit Abellio who treated him as a child just once. However...

“This isn’t good.”

Abellio gave his first negative rating. Then he painted a tsunami on the paper and it swept toward Grid.

“Ah...!”

The ability to make a painting real was a scam but the speed of his painting was too fast to handle. Grid couldn’t feel the delay that occurred when Hurent shaped his aura. Grid was swept away by the sudden tsunami and was overwhelmed with helplessness.

Of course, if his stats hadn’t dropped then Abellio wouldn’t have been able to paint at such a leisurely pace. Still, this was a test under the condition where his stats had fallen. The purpose of the test was to prove that he could do something in this state so he was frustrated because he couldn’t do anything.

It didn’t mean he was going to give up. In the midst of being swept away from the tsunami, Grid used Spear Shot and threw a spear toward Abellio. Then he attempted to use 300,000 Army Swordsmanship Stealth Sword to make Abellio look away from his paper. However, Abellio kept using the brush without looking away from the paper. Dozens of cords were drawn and tied up Grid’s body.

“Damn!” The trapped Grid was cursing when Abellio’s deep voice was heard.

“There are so many physical and mental pressures on the body that your body and heart are being eaten away... correction is needed in order for you to develop... hmm, it won’t be easy.”

“.....!”

Grid had a gut feeling. This was clearly a clue to raising his level.

Then the guide’s voice was heard. “Congratulations on passing the third test. Pioneer Grid, the Tower of Wisdom welcomes your visit.”

[Chapter 1220](#)

Were there any special expectations of the Pioneer? Or did he just miss interacting with others? Abellio’s attitude toward Grid was very friendly.

“What does it mean that there are so many burdens on my body and heart that I can’t develop?”

“It means exactly what it means. The skills that burden your body and your heart are inhibiting your growth.”

“Why?”

“Every time you use a skill, your body and heart need recovery and you can’t afford the enlightenment you need for growth.”

“Enlighten...ment?”

“In essence, growth comes from experience but experience will become full one day. At this time, the concept that replaces experience is enlightenment.”

“.....”

Grid tried to interpret it as simply as possible. Based on Abellio’s words, growth meant level and experience was, well, experience.

Grid looked back and recalled—in order to reach his current level, he had repeatedly leveled up via accumulating experience through quests and hunting, but then at some point, it became difficult. In particular, the amount of experience required for leveling up had risen too much since he reached a certain level and started raiding the yangbans.

‘Perhaps by killing the transcendent existence that is a half god, the experience that a player can accumulate has reached the limit?’

No, he should think about it in a simpler manner. This had nothing to do with the yangbans. Level 400 must be the maximum level a player can reach via experience alone. To make it easier to level after reaching this point, they needed the concept of enlightenment. So what was enlightenment?

He followed Abellio to the fourth floor and the structure was as complicated as a maze. Based on Abellio’s careful steps, it seemed like it would take some time to reach the destination. This meant there was still time. Grid felt this opportunity shouldn’t be missed and started a barrage of questions. “What is enlightenment? What do I need to gain enlightenment? Do I need to close my eyes and meditate under a waterfall for a certain period of time?”

Grid was troubled as he recalled the scene of the war god follower meditating under the waterfall. Enlightenment? Meditation? Did he really need to level up that way?

‘Is this really a game? It will be the first virtual reality prayer center. Shit.’

Abellio smiled at Grid who was flustered by the absurdity. “Enlightenment is obtained naturally. In fact, it isn’t something to be conscious of.”

“Naturally...?”

“It is the realization of the skills accumulated in the body and heart in the process of filling the body with skills and reflecting on the heart.”

“Based on just your words, I don’t think it is any different from experience?”

“No, it’s different. Experiencing is something that accumulates when solving an incident or defeating an enemy. Meanwhile, enlightenment can be achieved without doing those things.”

“...?”

Clear quests or hunt to gain experience. This was the ‘experience’ that Abellio was talking about. Then what was enlightenment that could be obtained without clearing quests or hunting?

“Don’t tell me it is shoveling in the air alone... No, does it mean that if I practice by myself, I will gain enlightenment and develop?”

“Haha, it seems that training in the world is called shoveling in the air these days.”

“.....”

Training? During the time when he first got Pagma's Swordsmanship, Grid had devoted himself to training to connect the footwork more quickly and smoothly. He had even been taught using Braham's experience with Pagma. To be honest, Grid was tired of training. He had even clicked his tongue when he heard that Kraugel had been training in the mountains for three years in game time.

Did Abellio read Grid's feelings?

"However, as I said earlier, you already have experience. You don't have to waste time shoveling in the air and can integrate your training into your daily activities."

"Do you mean that if I engage in the processes of blacksmithing and fighting, that itself is training?"

"Yes, but you have to do it in a way that doesn't break the harmony of the heart, body, and skill."

Finally, it returned to the origin.

"So far, you've been pushing the limits of your heart and your body to the extreme. Going beyond the limits is a great experience, isn't that right?"

That's right—even when blacksmithing or fighting against strong opponents, Grid went beyond his boundaries, got results, and developed.

"However, your experience is full now and the experience of going beyond the limits is unnecessary. Look back on some of your toughest moments recently."

"....."

The toughest moments were naturally when he fought the yangbans. Abellio threw a surprising question that hit the key point to Grid. "What did you get when you pushed your body and heart to the limit?"

Unpleasant memories rose in Grid's mind. After 200,000 Army Crushing Sword, he would use Open Potential and follow up with 300,000 Army Swordsmanship or a five fusion sword dance. He couldn't even control his body properly and could only stare helplessly at the battlefield. It wasn't only when he was fighting the yangbans. He was always exhausted every time he had a hard fight and felt helpless and weak for a few seconds.

"You would've gained an uncontrollable body and a sense of powerlessness and despair. Your body and heart would be busy sending warnings to you in the extreme crisis and you can't afford to feel enlightenment."

"....."

Abellio precisely saw through this. He got a single glimpse of Grid using Open Potential during the test and this gave a complete insight into the recent hardships Grid had faced. Grid felt an indescribable shudder and remained silent for a moment before gritting his teeth. He complained without hiding his feelings, "Then what should I do? Do I have to seal off my strongest skills if I want to improve?"

He had long felt the danger. He wondered if it was really okay every time he broke an arm or shoulder or lost health and physical strength in exchange for using his skills. Damn, it hurt to play the game. How could he play the game when tears came out from the pain?

Grid was certain—there were few people in the world who could keep using their skills while enduring the pain of their arms or shoulders breaking. He was confident that an ordinary person who wasn't accustomed to the pain would've sealed the skills or quit the game.

"No, if you seal up the skills you've worked hard to build up then all your efforts would've been wasted. That isn't possible."

In fact, an average person wouldn't experience what Grid went through. It was uncommon for a person to have a skill with a penalty of great pain. By the time an average person got that skill, they would've completed a body that could handle it.

"You must first harmonize your body, mind, and skill."

Grid had grown so fast that he suffered side effects.

"Although your heart and body have been completed, the reason you can't bear it is because you've accumulated too many types of skills. The fundamental problem is the fighting energy of the Hero King."

"Huh? Fighting energy?"

The fighting energy resource generated by the Hero King title was Grid's greatest power. As he kept fighting, he would accumulate more and more fighting energy, which would raise his stats higher and higher. It was the resource that helped complete Grid's body.

Fighting energy also didn't conflict with his other skills and stats. The unconvinced Grid was about to argue when Abellio pulled out his brushes and paint and started drawing something on a piece of paper. It was a color that resembled the fighting energy wrapped around Grid's body. Abellio didn't stop moving the brush. He continued to paint with the same red-purple colour until the paper was wet and about to tear. "Do you know that the former Sword Saint Muller used a combination of fighting energy and sword energy that was joined together as one?"

Abellio shook the paper and it started to tear. "It wasn't used as a means to strengthen sword energy and fighting energy but to quell the ferocity of fighting energy."

".....!"

"Fighting energy is a mythical power. It is a great power that a human vessel couldn't endure. Even a legend or transcendent will be overwhelmed by the fighting energy. There is no room for enlightenment."

The stunned Grid brought up the details of the Hero King title.

[Hero King]

[A hero of heroes! You are a living myth.]

'This...!'

It was stated right there. A myth. In the past, Grid wasn't sure that the myth class existed and interpreted this as a metaphorical expression, but not now. The myth rated class was an obvious concept and Grid wasn't yet a myth.

“You must first fuse fighting energy and sword energy. You have to suppress the fighting energy that is invisibly eating at your body and turn it into a complete force. From then on, your energy will be stabilized and your heart, body, and skill will be harmonized.”

[You have acquired new information.]

[The fourth advancement (awakening) public system ‘Enlightenment’ is activated.]

[Enlightenment]

[Continuously gain experience during battles or class-related activities.]

[You are unable to enjoy the effect of Enlightenment due to the ‘fighting energy’ resource.]

“Ah...! I understand what you mean. However, I can’t follow Muller’s progress. What am I supposed to do...”

Step.

Abellio stopped walking through the same section that kept repeating like he was stuck in a maze. Then he pushed at the solid wall to make a new space appear. There was a staircase leading up to the fifth floor. Abellio was already leading Grid upstairs. Grid noticed Abellio’s consideration and was a bit moved.

“Ah! If it isn’t Grid?!”

A familiar voice was heard. Grid looked up and discovered Biban. It was a bit puzzling that a Sword Saint was holding a rag instead of a sword in his hand...

Abellio smiled at the flustered Grid. “He is Muller’s teacher. He only passed on his techniques indirectly but no one can deny that he is the foundation of Muller. Pioneer Grid, I recommend that you learn how to fuse fighting energy and sword energy from Biban.”

“Huh? Biban didn’t seem to know about fighting energy...”

Biban had sparred with Grid but he never mentioned anything about fighting energy. Honestly, Grid didn’t trust that he could get reliable help from him. Biban’s appearance of being down on the floor in a cat pose while cleaning didn’t show any majesty. However, Biban was confident. “I don’t know what it is but I can help you. I can feel from the energy of the insane dragon iron in your hands that you have completed the mission I entrusted to you. This will be a reward.”

“.....”

He didn’t know what it was but he was going to help? They were both tower members but why was there such a big difference? Grid looked between Abellio and Biban with a complicated gaze.

TL: For those confused about ‘heart’, the word used in Korean can mean heart/mind. After discussing it with some people, I decided to keep it as Heart instead of mind due to various reasons. Just consider it as something similar to mentality/mental state.