

Overgeared 911

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“Knight of Destruction Singuled, I greet you.”

“...?”

This person knew his name, which had become a taboo and was forgotten? Singuled was bewildered when he arrived at the Overgeared Kingdom with Asmophel and Asmophel’s friend. The person who came forward was somehow familiar. The deep eyes that seemed like they could see through him... They were unusual.

“...Mercedes?” It seemed to fit. She had long become a lady, but the more he looked, the more vivid the memories became. The girl who was Captain Piaro’s aide—wasn’t she a person of loyalty? Why was she in the Overgeared Kingdom? Confused, Singuled doubted his memories.

“I am honored that you remember.”The white-haired beauty didn’t deny it; she acknowledged that she was Mercedes.

Singuled was furious. “Dammit, that Asmophel...! It is a trap!”

His eyes became as sharp like a wolf’s, and he pulled out his sword. He had consistently been gathering information on the empire while staying in the Murray Kingdom. So, he naturally knew that Mercedes, Piaro’s aide, had become the First Knight of the Red Knights. Singuled misunderstood that Mercedes had come to arrest him and even doubted the relationship between the empire and the Overgeared Kingdom.

“The empire asked for a truce with the Overgeared Kingdom? A truce?! Hah! It is just an act, and the Overgeared Kingdom is actually a tributary of the empire!”Singuled gave off killing intent as he shouted.

“For your reference, I am currently serving the Overgeared King.”

“What?”

Mercedes’ ridiculous explanation restrained Singuled’s killing intent. Asmophel stated to the confused and hesitant Singuled, “It is the truth. She is no longer a Red Knight.”

“Do you expect me to believe such nonsense?”

There were numerous stories of Mercedes fighting for the empire. Singuled had heard these stories from within the Murray Kingdom. Yet the best hound of the empire left it to serve the Overgeared Kingdom?It was impossible.

“It is true.”

“C-Captain!”

Great Swordsman Piaro, who Singuled trusted the most, appeared to give weight to Mercedes’ claims.

“Singuled, you are pretty old now.”

“...Captain!”

Singuled no longer felt any doubts. He couldn't control his tears as he embraced Piaro. The previous Knight of Destruction, who slaughtered every enemy of the empire and was an object of terror, became a mild sheep in front of Piaro.

"You have experienced many hardships. You really had a hard time."

They were both middle-aged colleagues now, and Piaro knew how badly Singuled had suffered as he had been in the same situation.

"Captain! Captain!! Sob!Sob sob sob!"

Piario watched the sunset with red eyes while Singuled cried in his arms. Asmophel looked at the ground and couldn't raise his head. Mercedes' heart ached as she witnessed the sadness of the old heroes.

[The goddess's blessing has been used.]

[(Fighting against the Gods) Legendary Blacksmith's Craftsmanship Skill has been enhanced.]

[(Fighting against the Gods) Legendary Blacksmith's Craftsmanship Skill has evolved into (Genuine - (Fighting against the Gods) Legendary Blacksmith's Craftsmanship Skill.

[Genuine - (Fighting against the Gods) Legendary Blacksmith's Craftsmanship Skill]

[The production button has been enabled, and the time it takes to make an item is now greatly reduced.

A minimum of epic rated items will be produced.

There is a somewhat high probability of producing unique rated items.

There is a certain probability of producing legendary rated items.

If certain conditions are met, there is a rare probability of making a myth reproduction or myth rated item.

* All stats of a production item will increase by 30%.

* When myth rated items are produced, all stats will permanently rise by +20 and reputation throughout the continent will rise by +1,000.

* Something special will occur with every three myth rated items created.

* The enhanced skill is fixed at master level.]

Ttang!

Grid shook off the temptation of the seven malignant saints and cleansed the First Holy Sword. He didn't hesitate after receiving two goddess' blessings and proceeded to enhance his blacksmithing skill as scheduled. Now, he held the Blacksmith Hammer to Go Against the Gods in his hand.

'Auto production!'

Grid was full of excitement. Finally, he could produce items automatically like everyone else.

'First, select the production method and prepare the materials for production. Then press the production button.'

Grid read the novice blacksmith's guide and chose to make one of the Grid mass-produced items. He prepared the necessary materials and clicked the button floating on one side of his field of view.

Then...!

[The item production has started.]

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

Something amazing happened. Grid's body moved by itself to raise the temperature of the furnace, smelt the iron, and then carry out the hammering. He didn't have to think as his body took care of everything.

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

'Isn't this really easy?'

Grid admired it. So far, he had been making items manually and had too many things to worry about—starting from controlling the temperature of the fire and the quality of the hammering to the timing of the quenching and trying to maintain the specifications of the items. He had spent hours or days making an item, exhausting his body and his mind.

This all changed now that he could automatically make an item. Grid didn't need to worry about anything. He saved a lot of mental power because his body made the items for him.

'Wow, shit. The other blacksmiths live such a sweet life...?'

He was relaxed. This method was too easy. His body was moving hard, but it felt like he was slacking.

'Can this help me?'

Grid's only talent was hard work. He believed that other people would catch up with him as soon as he stopped trying.

"..."

Grid had some room for relaxation and decided to use this. He entered an area completely separated from his body that was making an item.

'I'm going to practice triple casting.'

Triple casting!

It was an option attached to the myth rated Belial's Staff—an overpowered option which allowed him to cast three spells at the same time. He could cast three spells in the time it took other people to cast one.

'It is a complete scam.'

Still, there was one problem. For triple casting, he had to think of three magic spells at the same time. For instance, if he wanted to triple cast Magic Missile, Wind Cutter, and Fireball, he had to remember

the three names of 'Magic Missile, Wind Cutter, and Fireball' in his mind at the same time. It was a naturally difficult task.

'I was fortunate enough to succeed with double casting, but triple isn't an area where I can succeed with luck.'

Grab a random person and have them try it. No, if people were asked to recall three names of their favorite celebrities in their heads at the same time, how many would succeed? Grid bet that 100 out of 100 would fail. As such, Grid judged that triple casting was an area he had to train. He wouldn't be proficient unless he practiced it over and over.

'Magic Missile, Fireball, Bean Cup... Magic Missile, Bireee, Wind... Magic Missile, Pire...! Damn!'

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

His body moved by itself to make items while he constantly repeated these names in his head. His thoughts kept on getting ruined, making Grid totally frustrated. Sweat flowed down his body, and he was annoyed and nervous to the point of tears.

'Magic Missile, Fireball, Wind...Magic... Fire... Wind...'

However, he continued to practice without giving up. No matter what he felt, he repeated it again and again. It was something he knew he couldn't achieve overnight, so he tried to persevere without becoming nervous.

"Yes, the Murray Kingdom's king..."

In the vast agriculture fields, Piaro and Singuled sat beside each other and had a conversation. Piaro was deeply grateful to the Murray king for helping Singuled, while Singuled had mixed feelings after learning the truth behind Asmophel's betrayal of the Red Knights.

"Still... I can't forgive Asmophel." Singuled still remembered that time vividly. The families being captured and executed... The traitor Asmophel who pointed a sword at Singuled and his colleagues... The hellish scenes never left his mind. It was a nightmare that repeated every night.

"I... I..."

He would stab a blade into the hearts of Asmophel and the emperor. This had been Singuled's desire for the last 12 years. Despite finding out the truth, Singuled couldn't forgive Asmophel.

"I'm not telling you to forgive him." Piaro placed his hand on the shoulder of the angry, confused, agitated, and pained Singuled. "Asmophel doesn't want to be forgiven either. However, you need to know. The fact is that the empress was behind Asmophel. She is our true enemy."

"..."

"Asmophel's fate will be decided after getting revenge on the empress."

"...Yes, I understand."

The wind blew. The golden wheat fields swayed like a wave while the leaves of the rainbow potato plants fluttered, luring the birds in. A hawk descended from the sky and grabbed a leaf of a rainbow potato before flying up again.

‘Piaro...’ Red Sage Haster was watching Piaro. The great swordsman who boasted one of the best swordsmanship, the pillar who was loved and respected by the emperor and people of the empire...

Piaro—the greatest person whom his master Winfred kept praising—made Haster nervous.

‘He was more active in the Belial raid than Grid.’

As an NPC who grew steadily, wouldn’t he be stronger than Grid’s clone? Haster’s mind and body heated up. Haster was looking forward to the learning opportunities and rewards he could gain from having a confrontation with a powerhouse.

‘I will experience a breakthrough if I confront the Red Knights. I can grow to a level comparable to Grid’s before the National Competition.’

If he lost, he could just challenge Piaro again.

‘Thus, let’s get started.’

Haster stepped forward in order to ask Piaro for a duel. The moment Haster was about to reach where Piaro was sitting...

“Hey, why are you stepping on a bud?” A farmer sitting in a corner of the field grabbed Haster’s ankle.

“...?” Haster stopped walking and looked down. He realized that he was about to step on a blue leaf. “I’m sorry.”

Haster was a professional gamer and believed there was no status distinction between different occupations. Additionally, he wasn’t biased against NPCs because he had been with his mentor Winfred for so long. He apologized politely even though the other person was an NPC farmer. Haster bowed and stepped back.

“What? You’re stepping on it again?” The farmer spoke once again. Haster quickly moved his feet.

The farmer was already angry though. “No, why are you here in the first place? Why is an outsider hiding in these fields? Are you a mole sent by the empire?”

The farmer who growled and removed his straw hat wasn’t an NPC but a player. His ID was Hurent. Haster knew this person. ‘Aura Master?’

Why was Hurent—the one digit ranker who suddenly disappeared many years ago—working in the fields here? Hurent glared suspiciously at the baffled Haster. “You are a spy, right? You were approaching Piaro like a rat. Are you an assassin sent to hurt Piaro?”

“No, why are you making unreasonable assumptions? I am trying to request for a duel, not assassinate him...”

“What? A duel? Who are you? Haster? Do you think Piaro is free enough to deal with trash like you?”

“...Trash? Haven’t you heard my name before?”

“Do I have to listen to this a second time?”

“Huh?”

Haster was one of the best pro gamers in history. This was Haster’s pride. He believed that anyone who liked playing games should know his face and name. However, Hurent didn’t know Haster, and this caused Haster’s pride to crack like broken glass. Hurent swallowed the potato and attacked Haster, firmly mistaking Haster for an enemy.

Haster didn’t feel the need to clear up the misunderstanding. “First, I have to teach you manners.”

“An assassin who sneaks onto other people’s fields wants to talk about manners?” The person saying this was Hurent, who had led an army to invade the Overgeared Kingdom. Haster’s patience reached its limit. The vein on his temple pulsed as he pulled out his sword. This was the moment when one of the Five Miracles and the person with the power to defeat Kraugel emerged in the world in earnest.

However, his opponent wasn’t simple. Hurent had been a Sword Saint candidate, could freely manipulate aura, and had been trained by Piaro over the years. He was someone who had been chosen by Piaro.

“...?!” Haster was hit by a sokuri and felt a dizzying pain. (TL: Sokuri = Woven basket used to strain washed grains, dry vegetables or drain fried food in Korea)

The sokuri was too light and flew off without a sound. A chill went down Haster’s spine at the unpredictable trajectories and unexpected destructive force.

“You are the same as us....!”

“Who is us? Aura Snake!”

“...Ah!”

The fields shook. Far away, Piaro was laughing heartily. “That Hurent, he wants to increase his workload tomorrow. He is a model farmer.”

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The growth type hidden class, Aura Master, brought the potential of aura to the extreme.

Hurent’s aura exceeded the level of merely strengthening weapons or amplifying the power of a skill. He could freely convert aura into a certain weapon or release it as a dragon’s breath. In fact, he could even leave an aura marker on all living creatures and summon aura at that point, causing all types of variables in combat. Yes, there was no limit to an Aura Master. Hurent was strong.

Several years before during the Reidan invasion, he had already been beyond the category of a player. At the time, the S.A Group had assessed Hurent’s strength as the same level as Kraugel’s, which had been several times higher than the Grid of that time. That’s right. Hurent was one of the five people that Lim Cheolho called the Five Miracles.

However, Hurent later met Grid who had achieved rapid growth in the 1st National Competition. Hurent's Aura Master class hadn't been completed yet, and he was defeated in a futile manner. After that, his reputation was low compared to his skills.

In fact, Hurent's popularity had only been during the early days of Satisfy, and now he was no different from junk. There were few people who remembered Hurent after he left the rankings a few years ago. If they did remember him, it was often as the 'five seconds' person.

"You are the same as us....!"

Hurent's strength remained intact. No, he was a few times stronger than before. Haster's 'us' referred to himself, Grid, Kraugel, Agnus, and the other top players.

"Who is 'us'? Aura Snake!"

Years ago, Hurent fought Piaro and was forced to join the field work. Now, he carried grain and worked the hoe under the scorching sun, causing him to go through an extreme growth. His muscle strength was like Grid's, his improvisation was like Kraugel's, and the ability to control his aura like it was a living creature was like Agnus'.

Hurent's aura took the form of a snake, flew from his fingertips, and moved through the fields. The path that the aura snake took in the abundant wheat field was difficult to see and predict. It was a form of attack which couldn't be evaded or defended against. However, Haster's great hearing ability led him to using Ice Curtain and accurately blocking the snake.

"You aren't trash."

Hurent didn't just do field work. As soon as the day's work ended, he ran to the hunting grounds and steadily raised the level of his aura skills. He marveled at the solidity of the ice barrier when faced with the aura that dealt 9,900 fixed damage and ignored the target's defense.

Now Hurent paid attention to Haster's name and face. "You were a professional golfer?"

"Gamer!" It was a lowly provocation, but Haster couldn't help falling for it. His excessively high pride was the problem. Haster, the idol of many youngsters and the myth who had never lost, couldn't help falling for the cheap taunts. He was unfamiliar with the rough handling and couldn't overlook this. Thus, he used Dance of Redemption and missed something. It was the black mark on the ice barrier that was still being maintained!

"...?!" Haster was trying to create a stone pillar with Dance of Redemption when his face wrinkled like a piece of paper. There was a slight cracking sound from the ice barrier on his side. Aura that was as sharp as a knife protruded from it.

"Keuk...!" Haster managed to avoid it but had to stop Dance of Redemption. It was a missed opportunity to take the lead in this fight. Haster was urgently moving when new aura entered his vision.

"Oh, I forgot to warn you in advance. My aura leaves a mark, so you should be careful. The entire land that you are stepping on is filled with my marks."

Dozens of threads of aura spread out from Hurent like a spider web. The grey-haired man had a pleasant expression that didn't match his age. Of course, it wasn't pleasant for Haster who was trapped in the spider web.

"Why are you under Grid?"

From Haster's point of view, Hurent was an unexpected variable. He never dreamed that there would be a monster like Hurent under Grid, who already had many famous people. Haster also couldn't understand why Hurent was interfering with him.

"No way...!" Haster's movements became increasingly agile as he blocked the aura threads with a shield and struck with his sword. His response speed was becoming faster as he heard the unique sounds of aura in his ears. "This is Grid's will!"

Haster was reminded that there were some things he shouldn't overlook. It was that Asmophel was Grid's subordinate and Kraugel was Grid's friend.

'Grid knows about me!'

It was for certain. Grid had found out about Haster's existence through Asmophel and Kraugel.

'He judged that in order to maintain his top spot, he needs to keep me in check! That's why he ordered Hurent to interfere with me!'

Haster smiled as he grasped the situation. He felt proud that the Overgeared King was worried about him and acted to keep him in check.

"It feels good! I finally feel that I am in the right place!"

Rivals were needed. The greater the rival, the more his desires and talents would be stimulated. Haster was burning with motivation when an aura spear aimed toward his side. It was a spear that emerged from a mark on the ground. Hurent looked at Haster, who heard the sound and blocked the aura with his shield.

Then Hurent asked, "What are you saying alone? You believe that I am under Grid? That isn't the case."

"I already know the situation! You don't have to deny it!"

"Hey, I'm not! A young person like you is already losing his hearing!" Hurent was furious due to Haster's misunderstanding. He still remembered the humiliation of dying in five seconds. From the standpoint of Hurent who was planning to repay his grudge against Grid someday, being called Grid's subordinate was a huge shame. "I just want to repay Piaro for his kindness!"

Snake, spear, sword, thread—the relatively simple forms of Hurent's aura started to make a special change. They gathered together like flames.

[Aura Impact is being used.]

[Accurately imagine the shape of the aura within 2 seconds. If there is even a small error in the image, the skill will fail.]

Hurent never neglected image training in order to bring out the true power of an aura master! He shouted loudly, "Super! Dragon's Roar!"

[You have pictured a dragon's breath! By reproducing the power of a transcendent being, the power of your aura is greatly increased!]

[There is a limit to the power that a unique rated aura can exert.]

"...!?"

There was a big difference due to the restrictions of the aura rating, but it was a dragon's breath. The emission of aura flames was fast and widespread. It was a form of attack that made Haster's sharp ears and agility obsolete.

'He can stop it once or twice, but it is impossible for him to endure the pouring pressure forever.'

The dragon's breath had been upgraded from when Hurent used it in the past. It was a multi-stage fire skill which could be maintained for five seconds. There was a fixed minimum damage of 9,900, and the maximum damage could go as high as 306,900.

It didn't matter if the target's defense was 10,000 or 100 million. For players with an average health of 100,000, they would die as soon as they were hit by a dragon's breath.

[You have dealt 9,900 damage to the target!]

However, Haster didn't defend and allowed the breath to hit him. Then an orange shield surrounded his body. This was Heroic Story, one of the strongest passive defense skills which activated once all conditions were met.

[All resources have been restored by the effect of the passive skill, 'Heroic Story.' For one minute, your defense will increase in proportion to the amount of resources used within the past two minutes. Additionally, a shield that negates all types of skills and magic damage will be maintained for 10 seconds.]

"What...?"

Hurent had used the mid to long range of the aura to completely constrain Haster's movements and dominate the battle. Yet, for the first time, Hurent was now losing his composure. The dragon's breath that he poured out was blocked by the original shield, and it felt like he was possessed by a ghost.

'A skill that invalidates damage?'

No, such skills normally had a limit on how much they could defend against. That alone was powerful enough to be a scam. It could completely overturn the battle by blocking the enemy's ultimate move in a timely manner.

'However, his shield has no limit...!'

A chill went down Hurent's spine as he determined that Haster's orange shield was still standing against the dragon's breath.

'Is this an OP shield that invalidates all skill damage for a certain period of time?'

It was an unreasonable strength. This was certainly...

“The seven malignant...!”

“That’s right. You haven’t got one yet? You are late.”

Satisfy was terribly fair. Players had to give up one thing to gain another. Haster saw that Hurent had met Piaro and missed the timing to obtain the seven malignant saints quest.

“The gap will widen in the future.”

Now was the time for payback. Haster taunted Hurent before raising his shield and rushing to Hurent.

“Too shallow!” Hurent avoided Haster’s shield by tilting his upper body and prepared to insert an aura thorn. Still, the aura thorn developed with Aura Impact failed to penetrate Haster’s orange shield.

“It is the end,” Piaro muttered while watching the fight with Singuled. He saw Haster moving through Hurent’s aura thorn and swinging his sword.

At that moment...

“The reason why Hurent used farming tools was for the development of his swordsmanship,” Piaro said meaningful words.

Hurent dropped the sokuri and pulled out a sword to block.

“...!?” Haster was baffled by the move. ‘What is this defensive posture?’

Such movements weren’t possible with just reflexes and control. It was clear that there was a compensation effect from a high-level Sword Mastery skill.

‘How high is his Sword Mastery level?’

Haster was confused by this Hurent, who had turned into someone else, and forgot... Hurent had been a candidate for becoming a Sword Saint!

“Super sensitivity!”

“What?”

Simultaneously, Grid was working in the smithy...

‘...Wait? Is it possible to use the goddess’ blessing on Pagma’s Swordsmanship itself instead of a specific sword dance?’

Grid’s blood pressure was rising from the triple casting, and he took a break. Then he got a new idea. His ears felt ticklish as he had the thought. Swallowing down his curses was nothing new.

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[Pagma’s Swordsmanship Lv. 4]

[-When the skill is deactivated-

You can become one with the sword at any time.

- * Increases physical attack by 34%, critical hit rate by 25%, and critical damage by 20%.

- * This effect is only applied when a sword type weapon is equipped.

- * The skill consumes no mana.

-When the skill is activated-

Become one with the sword. You will be able to perform sword dances like Wave, Restraint, Link, and Kill.

- * The effect of the deactivated skill will be lost.

- * 20 mana is required to activate the skill.

- * Once deactivated, it will take 10 seconds until the skill can be activated again. Nothing will be consumed when deactivated.]

This was the reason why Grid's basic attacks and 100,000 Army Massacre Sword was so powerful. All active skills belonging to Pagma's Swordsmanship had the disadvantage of a long delayed activation time or cooldown time, but the function of the passive skill was the best. It was superior to other weapon mastery skills. Of course, the other mastery skills had the advantage of 'always applied', but Grid had Weapons Mastery in addition to Pagma's Swordsmanship. Thus, he didn't feel any big regret.

'What if I enhance this?'

Grid had originally planned to enhance Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle. He hadn't thought of enhancing Pagma's Swordsmanship itself. Pagma's Swordsmanship, which served as a conditional passive skill and intermediary to the active skills, was the most important skill for Grid. It was essential to him like air, so Grid usually forgot about it.

Then he had questions as he used the goddess' blessing to enhance his legendary Blacksmith's Craftsmanship skill. He wondered what it would be like if he had enhanced certain production-related skills like the Blacksmith's Breath. It was a trigger that made Grid think about enhancing Pagma's Swordsmanship.

'It could be a really good attempt.'

Grid didn't want to use the goddess' blessing to enhance skills like Link, Kill, and Transcend. The power of the skills was better than before, but the cooldown time was fixed at 30 minutes. Waiting 30 minutes for a combat skill was too inefficient. It could be interpreted as decreasing rather than increasing attack power.

'In the case of Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle, the cooldown is reduced from three hours to 30 minutes but...'

30 minutes still wasn't a short amount of time. Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle was used to hit powerful bosses instead of hunting or PvP, but it still could only be used once or twice in one raid, regardless of whether the cooldown was three hours or 30 minutes.

'However, this is basically strengthening the passive skill Pagma's Swordsmanship itself.'

It would strengthen his various sword dances as well as Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle, and the penalties related to the cooldown times might disappear.

'It might also be an opportunity to gain more fusion skills.'

Of course, there was no certainty regarding this. He could be wishing for too much.

"Phew."

The bigger the expectations, the more disappointed he would be! Grid took a deep breath to calm his excitement and checked if the goddess' blessing could be used on Pagma's Swordsmanship. Fearing the worst situation, Grid prayed desperately, 'Please! I hope it can be enhanced! Don't say nonsense like the target skill can't be enhanced using the goddess' blessing!'

Ttiring~

A new skill information window rose.

[Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship]

[* Increases physical attack by 40%, critical hit rate by 50%, and critical damage by 80%.

* This effect is only applied when a sword type weapon is equipped.

* The necessary footwork required for the sword dances will be reduced by half.

* You will be able to perform sword dances like Wave, Restraint, Link, and Kill.

* The enhanced skill is fixed at master level.]

"What?"

Grid blinked as he checked the information of Pagma's Swordsmanship, which had changed after the goddess' blessing was used. He instantly felt a sense of rejection.

"What is this short skill description?" He read it again. The description didn't even distinguish between activated and deactivated states. "No, what? What is this? It is completely ruined..."

For Grid, Pagma's Swordsmanship was a skill with various constraints. It was powerful in terms of being a legendary skill, but his past experiences gave him an understanding that non-combat classes had clear limits to their skills. Thus, he was mistaken for a moment. His face distorted when he saw the evolved Pagma's Swordsmanship. Of course, it was only for a moment.

"Ruined... Wait, isn't this a jackpot?"

Once Pagma's Swordsmanship evolved, the effects of the increase in physical attack power, critical hit probability, and critical hit damage were applied all the time!

'The attack power has increased by 40%!'

Was that all...? No, the critical damage had also risen sharply. Grid enjoyed the effects of the 'Death in One Shot!' title, and his critical hit damage could now reach 400%. Normal players normally had 150~210% critical damage, so it was twice the damage value.

'If God's Command also activates... Maybe...?'

Wouldn't there be a day when he would be able to kill a boss with one skill? Moreover, it wouldn't be a normal field boss but a named boss monster!

"...C-Crazy! This is crazy!"

This was a rare jackpot. His mind went blank, and his language skills degraded significantly. Grid could only repeat the same exclamations like a parrot. However, he couldn't act stupidly forever. Grid barely regained his mind and shouted, "Hey! Is anyone there?"

"Yes, Your Majesty," a woman answered immediately.

It was the legendary knight Mercedes who stood at the entrance of the smithy to protect Grid.

"Was his name Singuled? The former Red Knight that Asmophel brought with him."

"Yes, that's right."

"What number knight was he?"

"The Third Knight."

"How are his skills?"

"Of course, they were the best. I haven't seen him for 12 years, but I'm sure he has kept on training."

"Okay. Shall I check out the skills of the former Red Knight?" Grid smiled and used goddess' blessing without hesitation.

[The skill, Pagma's Swordsmanship, has been enhanced.]

[Pagma's Swordsmanship has changed to Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship.]

That's right. This was a good chance for Grid to check out the talents of a former Red Knights and test the power of the evolved Pagma's Swordsmanship. In fact, Grid had big expectations for Singuled. It was natural since he knew the talents of Piaro, who was the captain of the former Red Knights, and Asmophel.

'He is clearly an S-grade card.'

Singuled would obviously be lacking when compared to the SSS-grade Piaro and Asmophel, but Grid didn't doubt that Singuled was strong.

"Take me to Singuled."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Mercedes said. Seeing through Grid's thoughts, she added, "For reference, Sir Singuled was stronger than Sir Asmophel during their active days. However, he was lacking in many areas such as leadership and background, forcing him to stay as the Third Knight."

"...I-Is that so? T-That, that's good."

"...I will support Your Majesty." Mercedes smiled.

She was sincere about this since she truly admired Grid's growth. It felt like there was no limit to Grid's growth, which increased by leaps and bounds every time he went on an adventure.

Haster's orange shield was blocking all attacks classified as a skill. It was a particularly deadly shield for Aura Master Hurent, who used aura as his primary weapon. However, there was no discomfort on Hurent's face. He was still confident. "My earlier actions were just a test."

Hurent used Super Sensitivity. His attack speed with his sword reached its peak. Strikes poured down like rain through Haster's shield and wounded Haster all over. While slashing and chopping with his sword, Hurent kept talking, "I was like everyone else at first. I leveled up with the aim of being a warrior or a knight. Then one day, I became aware of the hidden class called Sword Saint."

The strongest combat class, Sword Saint—Hurent had become instantly fascinated by it. He made every effort to become a Sword Saint. Thinking that the path to becoming a Sword Saint was to train Sword Mastery to the pinnacle, Hurent had sealed all the sword-related skills except Sword Mastery. He then took on all types of penalties and hunted monsters using just his basic attacks.

"I did this for a few months. Perhaps I was ahead of Kraugel. That's why I was the first player to receive the intermediate level Sword Mastery skill."

At that time, he received the aura resource. The system had rewarded Hurent, who fought only with the sword and didn't consume the resource called 'mana.' The result of his hard work, as well as the crossing of talent and luck, was the growth type hidden class, Aura Master.

Haster's orange shield faded as he was cut by a sword. It wasn't a skill that ended after it received a certain amount of damage. Hurent had simply noticed that the duration was almost up and waited for it. Hurent's sword slashed at Haster's chest, and he used his ultimate technique. "Aura Swallowing."

It was like a serpent monster. The aura that rose from Hurent's shoulders swallowed Haster simultaneously from the left and right. This was the strongest PvP technique which inflicted 9,900 x2 damage to the target, physically restrained the target, and applied an additional 9,900 damage after the restraint effect. The wounded Haster allowed the technique to hit him, and Hurent smiled.

'There is no response.'

Hurent's Super Sensitivity was an active skill. It had a big restriction of consuming 100% mana in six seconds, but it increased agility by 20% for this duration and had the absolute effect of 'predicting' every action within 10 meters. Hurent with Super Sensitivity was like Kraugel during his peak. The performance was weakened for a Sword Saint because Super Sensitivity became a passive skill. However, even Kraugel's lower level Super Sensitivity boasted an excellent power.

[You have suffered 9,900 damage.]

[You have suffered 9,900...]

[You have suffered 9,900...]

'What?'

Haster was swallowed up by aura. He was in a confused state as he suffered continuous damage. It was surprising that Hurent was much stronger than Kraugel, who Haster had met and fought several months ago.

'Kraugel became a Sword Saint and developed a sword technique that cuts the world. Yet Hurent is much stronger than him?'

Kraugel had reset to level 1 after becoming a Sword Saint, so the levels of his newly acquired skills were still low, making it difficult to fully understand Kraugel's current status. In the confusion, most of Haster's health was exhausted.

[The 'Knowledge of the Red Sage' has given you Aura Resistance.]

[Any damage dealt by aura will be reduced by 30%.]

These notification windows popped up.

'It is great.'

He was Haster, the undefeated pro gamer. In the first place, he had no intention of losing. The reason for allowing himself to be hit by aura had been to gain the power for growth, not to be defeated. Haster took a potion. Then he once again activated the orange shield and escaped from the aura. Thanks to his mentor, he knew about Super Sensitivity and calculated that Hurent would be in an exhausted state.

Well, Super Sensitivity was a relatively ordinary skill. A few modern Red Knights used it. For example, the 19th Knight Fulito, who had been defeated by Grid, was one of them.

"Wait a minute, stop."

"...!?"

"...!"

Haster, who broke through the Aura Swallowing, and Hurent, who was exhausted, were both shocked. It was because a black-haired man had suddenly appeared in the middle of their battle. He had sharp eyes reminiscent of a bird of prey... This person was...

"Hello? I am Grid. I'm sorry to interrupt in the middle of your fight, but please stop for a moment."

"...??"

Yes, it was Grid, but wasn't his tone strange?

'What is wrong with this?' Hurent got goosebumps.

This was because Grid, who had possessed no manners since the 1st National Competition, was acting too politely. It felt as if he was acting like a stranger. Hurent had a feeling of rejection to this Grid. Grid smile brightly and spoke politely, "The fields have been badly damaged because of the two of you. Who should I claim damage compensation from? Can you decide this before continuing the fight?"

After his confrontation with the blacksmith god Hexetia, Grid's confidence had developed rapidly. He now knew that respecting others and having manners wasn't shameful. It was just another way to be

respected. He was different from the previous Grid, who had a distorted view of confidence. Grid had shown a rough attitude previously because he hadn't wanted to look funny to other people.

"Hum... Hum hum." He had misunderstood that people who acted politely were cowards.

"H-Hello. E-Excuse me...?" Hurent responded awkwardly to the polite complaint.

"I... Excuse me as well..." Haster was also affected by the atmosphere.

Everything seemed to calm, but this ended quickly.

'...What am I doing now?' In this awkward atmosphere, Haster suddenly returned to his senses. He ignored Grid as he remembered that he had to act before Hurent overcame his exhaustion. Haster tried to attack Hurent again, but his sword didn't reach its target.

[The durability of the Winfred's Sword has decreased by 43.]

It was because Grid used Drop to block the attack. Grid hadn't shown this skill when he fought the clone.

'An instant skill?' Haster's eyes shook as he wrapped a hand around his twitching wrist. Grid was still smiling, but a bit of irritation filled his voice as he asked, "Are you acting like this because I am smiling?"

"I-I'm sorry. I will calm down."

What was this situation? Why were they bowing? Both Hurent and Haster were stunned. They were completely overwhelmed by this mature Grid.

[Chapter 914](#)

'What is this...?'

'He actually appeared at this critical timing?'

Haster and Hurent each had a plausible plan. Haster was planning to deal the final blow to the exhausted Hurent, while Hurent planned to fight back using the 'Developing into a Legend' title. Yes, both of them were aiming for victory. They had no doubt that they were in a position to win. At this time, the uninvited guest named Grid appeared, rendering their plans useless.

'I can't help thinking that he aimed for this.' Haster missed his chance to win because of Grid and started to feel doubtful. How could Grid emerge at this exquisite timing? There was only one truth.

'He emerged on purpose. That's for sure,' Haster thought this.

He was the strongest talent who could see through other people and felt a sense of alarm from Grid.

'Grid was guarding against me. He must've received my location from Asmophel and has been monitoring me.'

It seemed that Grid was worried that Haster would go one step further by defeating Aura Master Hurent, which was why he had appeared when Haster was on the verge of victory.

'This is a method of someone who keeps the highest position. It is truly scary...'

Haster got a grasp of the situation thanks to his reasonable (?) line of thought. Meanwhile, Hurent was disturbed by the situation. 'Grid knew about me?'

Hurent was reminded that Piaro served Grid. It was likely that Piaro reported many things to Grid.

'That's right. Grid must've known that I've been a farmer in the Overgeared Kingdom for many years.'

In the first place, the Overgeared Kingdom belonged to Grid. There was little chance that Grid didn't know what was happening in his country. He had even known that Haster and Hurent were fighting right now. Hurent got a strange feeling.

'Grid, are you angry at your fields being ruined?'

In other words...

'It means that he respects my hard work in the fields under Piaro... This polite attitude is a means of showing respect.'

Hurent's heart thumped. Originally, Hurent had possessed no good feelings toward Grid. It was natural. He was an American, yet Grid had knocked him down in only five seconds. Due to Grid, Hurent—one of the strongest rankers in the world—had lost his reputation and went on wandering around for a long time. There had been times when he became depressed as he thought about how his life had been ruined by Grid. Hurent held a grudge against Grid and wanted to beat him someday.

Yet, at this moment, Hurent realized that those emotions were useless. Why?

'Grid clearly knows that I am working in the Overgeared Kingdom... He knew that I would mature and look for him... Rather than kick me out, he has been watching me silently. Then when I experienced a crisis, he rushed to help...'

Grid didn't dwell on the past.

'The current Grid... How wide is your heart?'

Grid was definitely a person with a big heart. After all, there was a reason why Piaro served Grid. Enlightened, Hurent became ashamed of himself for being obsessed with the past. He wanted to beat Grid? Was this why Grid hadn't appeared in front of him for the past few years?

Yes, Grid knew the truth. He had to know that Hurent had led the soldiers of the Eternal Kingdom to invade Reidan. Grid knew everything, yet he forgave Hurent. He just watched silently because he forgave Hurent. Then the moment when the fields got damaged like this, Grid ran over on his behalf. Despite this, Hurent was still obsessed with the past and wanted to get revenge on Grid...?

'Pathetic.' Hurent felt he was egotistic and selfish. 'If Grid's heart is like the sea, my heart is like a well. I am truly a small person.'

Hurent saw the entire truth. He was ashamed of himself and respected Grid. In the meantime, it had been silent for a while.

“So, who will pay the compensation?” Grid asked another question. His fields had been damaged due to a personal fight between outsiders! Grid couldn’t overlook it as the king of the Overgeared Kingdom. He knew the value of the blood and sweat that the farmers had shed.

‘I don’t know why Hurent is here or who Haster is.’

Grid didn’t wonder why they were fighting in his territory or why Piaro didn’t stop their fight despite being nearby. These were also secondary problems. There was an order to everything. Grid decided that the first thing to handle was the compensation issue.

“Of course, he will reimburse you.” Hurent pointed at Haster. “He is the one who damaged your field.”

“Hrmm...” Grid was slightly upset after hearing Hurent’s words. Grid definitely remembered Hurent. They had met in the past during the 1st National Competition. Hurent was the best American player who made him taste bitterness during the target processing event.

Despite having defeated Hurent in five seconds, Grid never belittled him. Grid was well aware of Hurent’s strength. What if Hurent had known about Pagma’s Swordsmanship, Restraint? Grid wouldn’t have been able to win so easily. At present, Grid vividly remembered Hurent’s insight. It had blocked Grid’s swordsmanship and the power of his aura, which dealt fixed damage regardless of target’s defense. The first time they met, Hurent had treated Grid like he was a child.

‘Now he is acting politely to me...’ Grid noticed that this was the power of etiquette. He acted politely first, so the older person had to be polite back. Grid felt proud.

Haster blushed. “I ruined the fields? Just because I stepped on two buds?”

That’s right. Hurent was the reason why the fields were damaged. He had misunderstood Haster and started a duel. Yet he was now holding Haster responsible? Haster felt wronged. He strongly rejected Hurent’s claim, “Hey Grid. Try acting like a man. I’ve already noticed your intentions. Didn’t you create this situation intentionally?”

Grid frowned at Haster’s shout. ‘This man continues to talk down to me.’

Haster was the opposite of the polite Hurent! Grid’s first impression of Haster was the worst. Hurent bowed and spoke using polite speech while Haster spoke nonsense. At this point, Hurent seemed like a great gentleman.

“Sigh... Yes... I’ll get the compensation from you,” Grid said. It was an extremely personal decision! Grid saw that Haster was the cause of the destruction and demanded an apology and compensation from him. “Haster? Be sure to reimburse me for invading the kingdom, making a disturbance, and causing material damage. Apologize to the farmers who have been working hard.”

“...You are still keeping up the pretense.” Haster’s convictions deepened. Now he was sure that he had fallen into a trap.

‘Yes, this was his plan from the beginning.’

Why else would the Aura Master be pretending to be a farmer? Wasn’t this the Overgeared Kingdom? There were no coincidences in this world. Haster believed that Hurent disguising as a farmer and then

fighting him had all been planned out thoroughly. He thought that Hurent was a member of the Overgeared Guild who acted upon Grid's orders.

'It is to keep me in check and examine my skills...'

Grid tested Haster without even raising a hand. Was this the so-called power of a king?

Haster was shocked by the power of Overgeared King Grid and took a step back. "Okay. Grid, I understand you now. I have learned that accompanying Asmophel is poisonous, so I will do my class quests on my own in the future."

"...?"

What was Haster saying? Why did he mention Asmophel's name all of a sudden? Grid was bewildered. Haster jumped as hard as he could and kicked the air several times. It was close to acrobatics. Every time Haster kicked the air, his body propelled one meter forward.

"What?" Was Haster trying to escape paying compensation? Grid frowned and shouted, "Arrest him!"

Who was he giving the order to? Haster let out a ridiculing scoff in the air. He had already escaped the range of Grid and Hurent, and there were only farmers in the fields. The knights and soldiers of the Overgeared Kingdom weren't present. Who could capture him?

'Grid, I have been hit by you many times. I won't lose my wariness again.'

He would show Grid that he wouldn't bow down no matter what means and methods were used to contain him. Instead, he would grow and see the throne. Haster vowed this.

"...!?"

Then two pillars of fire rose and caused an explosion. It was the continuous manifestation of top fire magic. This was deadly for Haster, who had already received great damage from his battle with Hurent.

'Kuk...! Who is it?'

There was a slight time difference between the two Fire Walls. Thanks to this, he got the chance to use Heroic Story. If he had been hit by the two Fire Walls at the same time, he would've died. Haster turned his eyes toward the direction the Fire Walls came from.

"Gulp. Huh, he's fine?"

"I am still lacking. My magic power is weak."

The people speaking were farmers who were eating boiled potatoes.

'This is ridiculous!' Haster denied reality. The two high-level magic spells that threatened to kill him were cast by them? He couldn't understand it at all.

'In the end, they are like Hurent...'

Grid had disguised the powerhouses of his guild as farmers. Haster's heart thumped as he ran away.

'Grid, how far ahead did you look? What do you want to do after grabbing me like this?'

Grid was definitely a different existence from Kraugel. The combination of power, status, and insanity made Grid a difficult opponent. Fear settled deep in Haster's mind.

"..." Grid felt a heavy sense of burden. It was due to Hurent, not Haster escaping. The man, who was at least 40 years old, was staring at Grid with sparkling eyes. Grid found it difficult to understand and felt uncomfortable.

[Chapter 915](#)

'What are you up to?'

Grid was the person who previously beat Hurent in just five seconds. Consequently, Grid was able to anticipate that Hurent resented him for the aftermath of the 'five seconds' incident. Yet...

'What is this?'

What was this loving attention?

'I feel very uncomfortable.'

Seeing Hurent's shining gaze, Grid felt burdened and turned away. It was an effort to wake himself up.

'I have to think about it first.'

Grid judged this and opened his mouth to say, "Did you take the wrong medicine? Why are you looking at me with such eyes?"

He was wary. However, Hurent was trying to appeal to him with his eyes, so Grid couldn't make any rash moves.

'I have to grasp the intent behind his ways to understand what he is interested in.'

It was fine. He could do it. Grid had spent the last year trying to use his head! He encouraged himself, thinking he no longer had a stone brain.

"Huhuhut. There is no need to act. Oh, I am older than you. Can I speak in a more relaxed manner?"

As Hurent's nonsense began, Grid fell into confusion.

"Act?"

It didn't matter if Hurent spoke less politely, and it was strange to listen to an old man talk in a polite way the whole time anyway. Why did he suddenly say that Grid was acting though?

'How am I acting?'

It felt like he was in front of a sphinx!

Hurent bowed to the baffled Grid. It wasn't a perfunctory bow that would make others want to slap him. He bowed with deep respect. "Thank you for your care over the past few years. I am amazed and honored that despite knowing the intentions behind why I came to the Overgeared Kingdom, you observed me instead of disturbing me. I feel embarrassed thinking about the days when I was obsessed with getting revenge on you."

“...???”

“I’m serious. Ordinary people wouldn’t be able to watch a competitor who can be a threat without being prejudiced about the past while also giving them new opportunities. Grid, I am fascinated by your boldness.”

“...???” Question marks continued to appear over Grid’s head. Grid was still feeling lost when Hurent showed a bitter smile and said, “You kept watching... I also thank you for being concerned about me fighting in the fields. Still, I feel it is somewhat bittersweet. I’m so weak that you defeated me in five seconds, and I can’t beat the farmers in this kingdom... It must’ve been difficult to see such a thrilling battle.”

“...”

This was crazy. Hurent wasn’t sane. It was obvious that this human was crazy.

Grid was watching Hurent...? He was considerate enough to give Hurent new opportunities... and he protected Hurent in the fight...?

‘Since when? Ah!’ Grid stared at Hurent like he was a madman before belatedly realizing that Hurent was wearing dirt-covered clothes and there was a straw hat at his feet. ‘...Is he the second Kraugel?’

Grid’s head was definitely working better than before. As soon as he heard Hurent’s story and confirmed the pattern, he gained a rough grasp of the situation. ‘This guy has been a farmer in the Overgeared Kingdom for the past few years and mistakenly thought I knew about it. He misunderstood my intrusion in the fight as an act to protect him.’

Did Grid have a constitution prone to causing misunderstandings? Why did people misunderstand his actions every time? Grid had a headache, but he also felt relieved.

‘Most of the misunderstandings went in a positive direction.’

If he had been misunderstood in the negative direction, how uncomfortable and frustrating would it be? That road was too dark to imagine.

“I will explain, Your Majesty.” Piaro quietly approached them at this moment.

“Tell me,” Grid gave permission.

Then Piaro started the long story. After Hurent led the Eternal army and invaded Reidan, Piaro saw his potential and took him in as a farmer. Since then, Hurent had been contributing to the agriculture of the kingdom... Piaro didn’t hide a single truth and explained everything to Grid, “Hurent’s aura is truly great. It is at a level that can cause an agricultural revolution. Since he became a naturalized farmer, the crop production has increased by 20%...”

“Naturalization? He isn’t an illegal?” Grid frowned as he listened. He was feeling more angry than disappointed with Piaro. “Does it make sense to take an enemy, who might hurt me, and make him work in the fields? Do you want me to be assassinated?”

Grid didn’t doubt Piaro’s loyalty. At the time of the Belial raid, Piaro had fought for Grid and risked dying without achieving his purpose of getting revenge on the empress. In particular, Piaro had given all the

loot he acquired from Belial to Grid. Yes, Grid found it difficult to doubt Piaro's loyalty. However, this time, it was hard to understand. Taking an enemy who wanted to harm Grid and placing him in the fields...? In the end, Piaro was raising his enemy. This was the part Grid couldn't understand. It was a reprehensible action.

"..." Piaro shook his head. He couldn't say anything because he knew why Grid was angry. Grid grew angrier because Piaro didn't give an excuse. He had to interpret the silence as agreement. Fortunately, the misunderstanding didn't deepen. It was thanks to the emergence of the potato lover—no, Bland who was more famous for being a farmer than a magic swordsman these days.

"King Grid, the person called Hurent was always under my supervision."

"Bland."

It had been several months since they last met, but Bland had a potato in his mouth like usual. Bland swallowed and explained to Grid in detail, "It was Piaro's command. He told me to kill Hurent if I ever saw him take any actions with a different heart. It was a thorough preparation for Your Majesty's safety."

Piario added, "It was also my personal judgment. Hurent is someone without the capacity to ambush a person. I am convinced that even if he did point his sword at Your Majesty, it would be in a fair fight. If that day came, I would run to Your Majesty and explain all the circumstances."

At first, Piario had only coveted the aura ability. Hurent's ability to plow dozens of targets on the ground had room to grow to a level similar to Piario's. Piario had no doubt that Hurent would grow into a person who would contribute to the Overgeared Kingdom's agriculture, and Hurent met these expectations. Additionally, Piario had been aware of the danger, so he stationed people around Hurent.

"I see... It was like this." Grid was relieved after finding out the entire truth. The disappointment and anger that sprouted in him at the thought of his most trusted loyalist betraying him gradually disappeared. However, Grid still felt sad. Thus, he gave a warning, "In the future, don't keep secrets from me. I want you to report everything that happens to me."

"Yes, I understand. In the future, I will report to Your Majesty whenever I recruit a new farmer," Piario answered energetically. His still solid loyalty could be seen. No, it had grown from before. He was grateful that Grid had helped him reunited with Singuled, his old friend. It was a harmonious atmosphere.

'...I'm ashamed.' Hurent stood alone and blushed. It was because he realized the reality of the situation through the conversation that went on between Grid, Piario, and Bland. He was ashamed because he had misinterpreted Grid's actions and even admired Grid.

'I will be a fool for the rest of my life.' Hurent became uneasy because he thought that Grid would laugh at him. He wanted to hide in a mouse hole.

"Do you have a grudge against me?" Grid suddenly asked Hurent.

Hurent glanced at Piario and Bland before answering honestly, "It would be a lie if I said I didn't have those emotions. Now that I think about it, I don't hate you. I was defeated purely because I was weak. It is funny if I keep thinking it is unfair."

“Hoh...? Your lost your honor because of me, but there are no hard feelings?” Grid was full of doubts as it was hard to believe.

Yet Hurent’s eyes were shining brightly. “Secluding myself from the world was the path I chose. I didn’t lose my place because I was defeated.”

“Did you seclude yourself to train?”

“That’s right. I wanted to beat you.”

“You said there was no grudge?”

“Yes. It is just the matter of a man’s pride.

“Hrmm...”

Grid was a special person. He had experienced both the lows and highs of life. He had lived the life of the weak, the poor, and the debtor as well as the life of the rich, the life of those envied by others, the life of a challenger, and the challenged. In the process, he had met all types of humans and had been treated differently by them. Sometimes, he had been downtrodden and stepped on, while other times, he had stepped on them or they had given him joy.

That’s right. Grid had a varied history. Setting aside his intelligence, he had a good eye for people. Grid could see that Hurent was an upright person. He could sympathize with Hurent since there had been a time when he also aimed for Kraugel. Thus, Grid made a suggestion, “I will give you a chance to get revenge. Let’s fight. Come on.”

“What?”

The opportunity Hurent desired had suddenly arrived? Hurent thought he would be deported, so this was a good chance for him.

“...No, I still can’t fight you,” Hurent rejected the opportunity. Why...? Hurent continued saying, “Do you know the person called Haster?”

“The one here before? It is the first time I’ve seen him.”

“That’s right. He is someone unheard of in Satisfy. Yet I struggled to win against him.”

Haster had the power of the seven malignant saints, and he couldn’t be called weak. It was enough to make Hurent feel rather weak. After all, he was someone who had suffered several defeats to the farmer called Bland.

“I am shamefully weak despite all my efforts over the past few years.”

“...?”

“It is absurd for a weak person like me to fight someone like you. I realized it today.”

“...”

“I will give up on this desire. I will humbly accept the defeat of that day. I should’ve done it earlier but enlightenment was too late. Hut! Just think of it as this uncle’s stubbornness.”

“...”

Grid still vividly remembered Hurent’s powerful aura attacks and his control that was comparable to Hao’s. Looking back at it now, Hurent’s strength had been amazing. If Hurent had grown steadily over the years, he was probably still one of the strongest players in the game. In particular, he was one of the few players who could threaten Grid. Yet this powerhouse called himself weak and gave up his desire to defeat Grid, wasting his efforts of the past few years?

‘This is wrong.’ Grid felt very regretful, especially because he liked Hurent’s personality. So, he suggested once again, “You have been working for so many years, and now you want to avoid a confrontation with me? Won’t it be a lifelong regret? You will want to turn back the clock one day. Come on, let’s fight.”

“You are a really decent person.” Hurent’s nose wrinkled. Feeling deeply grateful for Grid’s care, Hurent didn’t stay stubborn. He released his fighting spirit in return for Grid’s consideration. “Okay! Let’s fight! I will challenge you!”

“You should’ve come out like this sooner.”

[Aura Impact is being used.]

[Accurately imagine the shape of the aura within 2 seconds. If there is even a small error in the image, the skill will fail.]

“Aura Thunder!”

[You have visualized lightning falling from the sky! By reproducing the power of nature, the power of your aura has been increased greatly!]

[There is a limit to the power that a unique rated aura can exert.]

Red lightning bolts fell from the sky several times. It happened in a flash. This wasn’t something that ordinary humans without Super Sensitivity could react to.

[You have suffered 9,900 damage.]

[You have suffered 9,900 damage.]

[You have suffered 9,900 damage.]

[You have received an electric shock.]

[You have resisted.]

Grid was filled with a thrilling feeling as he was struck by the lightning. It was a power that rendered his defense and resistance useless.

‘The fixed damage has grown close to 10,000!’

It was too strong. Hurent was one of the best players. Grid could see this himself. He felt respect for Hurent who had been trying hard for so long.

“Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle!”

This was the result.

[You have suffered catastrophic damage!]

[A person who is becoming a legend doesn't die easily. You can resist all attacks for 2.5 seconds with a minimum of health.]

"...Hah." It was the first time Hurent had suffered like this in a long time. His shoulders sagged, just like the day of the 'five seconds incident'. "Look... I am weak..."

"Didn't you last 20 seconds this time?"

"Haha..."

"Oh, aren't you in bad shape because you just had a battle?"

"Haaaah..."

"..." Grid felt a sense of guilt for some reason. He felt it was a pity for Hurent's shoulders to sag with useless regret. Maybe this was why he reached out. "If you don't have a place to go, join the Overgeared Guild. Become a scout."

"A scout? I already have a job as a farmer."

"Are you serious?"

"Yes. I have to learn more from Piaro."

"How much stronger...?"

"At the very least, I have to escape from being a weakling. What is the point if I can only defeat mobs? I can't keep losing when fighting against other people."

"Ah, yes. Then just apply to the guild."

He wouldn't miss out on Hurent. Grid took the opportunity to recruit the best talent, and Hurent joined the Overgeared Guild. It was a great event that would make several people fall from amazement.

[Chapter 916](#)

[Name: Singuled

Age: 39 Gender: Male

Race: Human

Title: Successor of a Half Killing Energy Method

*When attacking, there is a 22% chance that the opponent can't resist the 'internal injury' state.

*When dealing a counterattack, there is a 9% chance that the opponent can't resist the 'internal injury' state.

The enemy will suffer terrible pain, and all stats will fall dramatically. It is accompanied by bleeding (severe) and reduced resources recovery.

Title: Knight of Destruction

*Increases physical attack by 20% and attack power of wide area skills by 40%. The lower the health, the greater the attack power increase.

When attacking an enemy with internal injuries, 2,400–4,400 additional fixed damage will be inflicted.

Level: 455

Strength: 4,001 Stamina: 1,760

Agility: 1,008 Intelligence: 209

Skill: Empire's Swordsmanship (B), Penance (A), Frenzy (SS), Half Killing Energy Destruction Method (SS)

-The Third Knight of the former Red Knights.

He inherited his family's vision and sometimes feels sad about his power, which kills the enemy in a terrible manner.]

'Amazing.' Grid felt in awe of Singuled as he confirmed Singuled's information through Character Observation. It was the first time he had met a named NPC with these biased stats.

'Most knights have evenly developed their stats, while this...'

Killing energy destruction method—did Singuled have to develop strength in order to unleash the power of this skill that had a frightening name?

'I think I can understand why Mercedes' evaluated him as being stronger than Asmophel.'

Killing Energy Destruction Method and Frenzy were both top-rated skills. As the user's health decreased, attack power and agility increased greatly. A high percentage of their blood would also be restored through the blood-sucking method. There was the disadvantage of being weak to magic attacks, but Asmophel wasn't a magician.

'Apart from Piaro, there will be few Red Knights who can fight one on one with Singuled. However, he will be a meal for a magician.'

Grid smiled gently as he saw Singuled bowing in front of him. "Welcome to the Overgeared Kingdom. I know about your situation. I will help you get revenge along with Piaro and Asmophel. Until then, I hope that you will support me together with Piaro."

"Yes." There was no enthusiasm in Singuled's answer.

It was unavoidable. Singuled had only come to the Overgeared Kingdom for revenge and had no reason to be loyal to Grid.

'The spar shall be postponed until next time.'

There was a high possibility that his affinity with Singuled would decline if he asked for a duel. Grid had to be careful until he gained a certain amount of loyalty from Singuled. Grid whispered into Piaro's ears, "I want to know more about the killing energy. Find a clue to open up Singuled's heart."

“I will do my best.”

‘We need talent.’

Lauel had been obsessed with building up the workforce ever since he decided to help Grid build the kingdom. This obsession hadn't changed despite transcendent NPCs like Piaro, Asmophel, and Mercedes serving Grid. The Saharan Empire, the Hwan Kingdom on the East Continent, hell, and so on—the opponents who would be hostile to the Overgeared Kingdom in the future were several times stronger. As such, Lauel was nervous. He thought he should gather more people and develop the kingdom quickly. Lauel saw that there would be no future for the Overgeared Kingdom if they couldn't break down the empire in front of them.

The reality of the situation wasn't that easy.

‘So far, there is no talent.’

After the founding of the Overgeared Kingdom, Lauel had used the authority of the prime ministers to gather talented people using all sorts of methods. He offered the Grid set, gave tax exemptions, and created extensive quests that jeopardized the treasury. Lauel used all types of benefits and temptations to lure people to the Overgeared Kingdom and then tried to screen them strictly. However, there were few talents who caught his eyes. It was difficult to meet anyone better than the existing Overgeared members.

‘I don't want geniuses. I just want to detect people with the appropriate potential for their field.’

Lauel sighed as his anxiety deepened day by day. He felt more desperate because he knew why it was hard to gather talents.

‘It is a phenomenon created by a backlash.’

There was still a large number of players—especially those who believed themselves to be superior to others—who were hostile to the Overgeared Kingdom. They chose to take a different path from the Overgeared Kingdom, thinking it was enough to get them ahead. This path was naturally to side with the empire. Many rankers—apart from some top rankers—knocked on the door of the empire due to the offered benefits and fame. They wanted to keep the Overgeared Kingdom in check under the illusion of justice.

‘Stupid humans... It is about time that this false sense of pride of fairness is ended.’

Satisfy offered an open field similar to Earth and had an infinite degree of freedom. At this very moment, numerous players were making or experiencing their own stories. Thus, many people overlooked Satisfy's main storyline. Why? At this moment, there was no connection between the main story and their gameplay content.

‘Satisfy is huge. The Saharan Empire is a prime example.’

The starting point for all players was the West Continent. Right now, the West Continent was under the control of the Saharan Empire. The Saharan Empire dreamed of a complete conquest over the West Continent, and all kingdoms were afraid of the empire. It meant that war was approaching inevitably.

'The Saharan Empire will unleash a unification war on the continent.'

Lauel interpreted this war as the first main story of Satisfy. The lives of the two billion players could change depending on the outcome of the war.

'Once the Saharan Empire succeeds in the unification of the continent, it is natural for certain NPC forces—such as the empire's nobles—to increase their status... Players are likely to receive fewer benefits than they do now.'

Discrimination would arise. The NPCs had different mindsets from modern people and would infringe on the 'freedom' that players currently enjoyed.

'Then they will cross over to the East Continent, and the players caught up in the empire's ambitions will suffer.'

This might be an extreme idea, but Lauel was convinced that it would be better in many ways if the ruler of the West Continent was a player rather than an NPC. This fact had already been proven by the Overgeared Kingdom. Most of the infrastructure built by the Overgeared Kingdom was for the convenience of the players. However, many people thought that Grid and the Overgeared Kingdom weren't good because the empire was their public enemy.

"...King Grid is too great."

Wasn't he a person who could recruit monsters as subordinates every time he went on an adventure? It was difficult to list each one, such as Piaro, Asmophel, Mercedes, Sticks, Sua, and so on.

"Of course, I am the smart one... It would be better if I had the insight to read what the other person wanted... What is this? Is it the difference in charm? Am I so perfect that people can't easily get close to me?" Lauel deliberately made a foolish expression in front of the mirror.

"What are you doing? Is there a game like this in the United States?" Someone opened the office door without knocking.

Lauel looked back with surprise and saw Grid, but his gaze was focused on the person behind Grid. "This is...?"

"Don't you know him? He is Hurent. He joined the Overgeared Guild today."

"..."

The person had a roughly grown beard and grayish hair. Lauel confirmed the face and ID of the middle-aged man that Grid had brought with him several times. It was definitely Hurent, the Aura Master. He was the hero who had the expectations of the American people during the 1st National Competition. Hurent was a competitor that Lauel acknowledged and a monster-level talent that Lauel had been so eager for.

"I thought you would be happy? Why are you just standing there absentmindedly?" Grid wondered.

"...Now you're just picking people up in the front yard?" Lauel flopped down like he had lost all strength.

“Huh? You aren’t joining the National Competition?” Lael asked, feeling startled. He was baffled that Grid would be absent even though he had already played a major role and benefited greatly from the previous National Competitions. “Why are you refusing when this is chance to get definite rewards? You can rest assured if you’re worried about the empty house being hit like last year. Didn’t I tell you that I have made thorough preparations this time?”

“Oh, be sure to prepare for the empty house. But I’m not refusing to compete because of the kingdom.”

“Hrmm.” Lael calmed down his agitation. Grid was the best. He could win three gold medals when he participated in the National Competition, and this was a chance that came once a year. Wasn’t he the king of greed? There must be a reason why Grid wasn’t joining.

Lael thought about it and shrugged. “I see. Your Majesty has your own plan.”

“Right.”

Grid planned to have fun secretly playing the demon king. He wanted to tell Lael the truth and boast about his role in this year’s National Competition. However, the S.A.Group had issued a contract clause stating that the demon king project couldn’t be leaked outside, and Grid had signed it. So, he couldn’t boast about it.

“Hrmm...” Lael saw Grid’s expression and was relieved. “Well, Your Majesty isn’t a person who likes receiving damages... I believe that you will do well.”

“Yes. I’m sure you will do well in the National Competition. Shouldn’t the United States win at least once while the immigration is delayed?”

“If Your Majesty doesn’t join, the champion is already the United States.”

“You sure seem confident. Doesn’t South Korea have Yura and Peak Sword?”

“They are certainly remarkable. There is also Jokbal. Still, can those three afford to go against the power of the United States?”

“Um...” Grid frowned. He recalled the talents of the US representatives and felt that only three people were lacking.

‘I don’t mean to ignore Yura and Peak Sword but...’

The players from the United States were too great. Just Kraugel and Lael were big threats, let alone the other powerhouses. Hurent was also American.

‘I don’t know if Zibal will be present.’

Then what about South Korea?

‘The difference is too big.’

Grid was strong enough to guarantee at least two gold medals, but what about Yura and Peak Sword?

‘They will lose the gold medal if they are in the same event as Kraugel...’ Grid noticed his mistake.

What if South Korea's ranking fell because he accepted the position of demon king for his own profit and fun?

'There might be a sudden surge in the number of anti-fan cafe members...?'

It was likely given the propensity of the Korean netizens. The fact that Grid refused to represent the Korean team due to personal greed would arouse public indignation once it was revealed. It wouldn't be strange if he were regarded as a person who sold out his country.

'Why?'

Grid wasn't an individual. He was the king of the Overgeared Kingdom. If he were criticized, the prestige of the kingdom would also naturally fall.

'Do I have to refuse the demon king project?'

Did Lael read Grid's look of concern? Lael reassured Grid, "Your Majesty can do what you want. I asked you to become king for our benefit, not to put shackles on you. Don't be afraid of criticism, and just do what you want."

"This person..."

Sometimes he was annoying, yet he was encouraging at other times. Giving Lael a warm smile, Grid rose from his seat. "I know you have been concerned about your eyes these days, so look forward to it. I think I can make convincing sunglasses at the end of the National Competition."

"Sunglasses?"

"It is a pair of sunglasses that the evil eyes' king can use."

[Chapter 917](#)

-Grid: How are you?

-Kraugel: Are you worried?

-Grid: No way. Who will dare worry about the person in the sky? I was just saying a common greeting.

-Kraugel: Things are good. I will get straight to the point. Why did you send me a whisper?

-Grid: Hehe... Can you let me know one thing? Are there any minerals in Satisfy that can be used as a material for sunglasses?

-Kraugel: Sunglasses? I see. The person who made the first contact with the evil eyes' king was you. Are you planning to appease the evil eyes' king?

-Grid: Amazing... Don't you know this is really creepy now? How can you guess that from one question?

-Kraugel: ...Isn't it funny that you are asking me about minerals?

-Grid: Pagma's knowledge isn't universal. I don't know what materials are required to make the item until the recipe is acquired.

-Kraugel: I heard you recently got an accessories maker? Won't it be better to ask her?

-Grid: Unfortunately, she still lacks experience. On the other hand, you have accumulated the most experience and knowledge in Satisfy. Please do me a favor. If you help me this time...

-Kraugel: The grandmaster's experiments wear black glasses. They wear glasses made by processing ether diamonds.

-Grid: Grandmaster? Experiments? Diamond?

-Kraugel: Once again, it is an ether diamond. I'm told it can be mined from the Elliter Mine in Talima.

Grid: The dwarf city... Do the dwarves grant access to the mine?

-Kraugel: The Elliter Mine has long been abandoned.

-Grid: Why?

-Kraugel: Elliter mine has a gap in the dimension. Muller sealed it, but the seal has weakened recently.

-Grid: A gap in the dimension?

-Kraugel: It is also known as a hell gate. Sometimes the 12th great demon's 'hand' will pop out.

-Grid: Hand...?

-Kraugel: A hand that can grab hundreds of dwarves at once and turns them into dirt.

-Grid: Is it impossible to go there right now?

-Kraugel: That's right. The dwarves won't open the mine.

-Grid: So, that means there is only one way to get the ether diamond right now?

-Kraugel: That's right.

-Grid: The National Competition's compensation.

-Kraugel: I wish you luck.

-Grid: Same. I hope you aren't disturbed.

-Kraugel: Are you mocking me now? You are a few steps ahead of me this year.

-Grid: Next year?

-Kraugel: We will stand side by side.

"Side by side instead of surpassing me again? He is a humble person."

Grid finished whispering and stood up. He sensed the resurgence of a competitor with SSS-class talent who was different from the ordinary Grid in many ways. Grid's expectations were greater than his fear. He was stimulated rather than daunted.

The S.A Group's headquarters—how was a building permit given for this? Did they give bribes? The building was so tall that it raised questions.

A car that was rarely seen stopped at the entrance of the lobby. This was a limited edition sports sedan which only a few people around the world had. It had been three years since the release of this model, but the unchanging value and sophisticated design still captivated people's attention. The staff of the S.A Group in the lobby stopped their work and paid attention to the car. There were few people in South Korea who didn't know of the car's owner.

Click.

There were many exclamations when the young man descended from the car. Shin Youngwoo—he was famous for being the first king among two billion players around the world. He received star treatment even among the employees of the S.A Group.

"Welcome. I was surprised when I heard you wanted a direct visit." Yoon Nahee, the manager of the operations team, came to meet him.

"It is nice to experience the fresh breeze. This is the best company in the world."

"It is thanks to Youngwoo-ssi and the other users who enjoy playing the game."

"You're grateful to the users? I have a feeling that today's contract will be successful."

Yoon Nahee was very surprised by Youngwoo's attitude. The silly young man she met last year was now gone.

'He is a man who grew up with Satisfy...'

She shouldn't forget that the man in front of her was more special than anyone else. Yoon Nahee smiled brightly. "We put our heart and soul into the contract with Youngwoo-ssi. You can look forward to it."

"You put your heart and soul into it? Did the company's position on pavranium and divine stone change?"

"I'm sorry, but... as we mentioned in advance, we can't include pavranium and divine stone in the rewards. Pavranium is a class-specific item, so the acquisition path and quantity are limited. Divine stone is classified as a 'divine' item above adamantium and bloodstone, meaning players can't acquire it yet. Didn't you check the copy of the contract this morning?"

"I just wanted to ask. I understand. I can't argue about this."

"Thank you for your understanding. The director will explain in more detail but Youngwoo-ssi's rewards are limited to tier one production materials like last year... You—?" Yoon Nahee felt disturbed as she took Youngwoo to the elevator. It was due to the particularly dark smile that spread across Youngwoo's face. "What are you thinking?"

"Ether diamond. It is the reward I want."

"...!!" Yoon Nahee fell silent as she heard the name of the unexpected item. It was fortunate that she didn't fall down. The ether diamonds—they were diamonds encased in the dark matter called 'ether'

that absorbed light and magic power. The mineral inherited the characteristics of ether and diamonds, showing exceptional power under certain conditions. It was worth more than adamantium and bloodstone which were the representatives of different worlds.

‘However, the mineral rating is below adamantium and bloodstone.’

It was naturally one of the best minerals that existed in the human world. Still, there was a problem.

“...You know about it? The acquisition path of the ether diamond hasn’t opened yet.”

The special power of the ether diamond gave it a certain kind of usefulness, and it had the potential to make the ‘rating’ obsolete. It was something that a player shouldn’t have yet.

“Youngwoo-ssi, the balance is important. At this point in time, players shouldn’t have an ether diamond either.”

Shin Youngwoo knew the balance that she was concerned about. For example...

“Do you think I will free the evil eyes’ king?”

“...!!”

Ding!

The elevator door stopped where Yoon Nahee was heading. It was the 51st floor. She stood behind Shin Youngwoo like a statue as he knocked on the door of Director Yoon Sangmin’s office. He stated, “You promised me. You will give me up to seven items under a certain rating for the demon king project.”

Yes, the rating... The S.A Group focused on the rating of the rewards. That was a mistake.

“N-No.” Yoon Nahee looked at the office door that closed and hurriedly pulled out her phone. She tried to call Yoon Sangmin.

(What’s going on?) Fortunately, Director Yoon Sangmin picked up just after greeting Shin Youngwoo. She was in his emergency contact network, so Yoon Sangmin couldn’t ignore her.

Yoon Nahee shouted, “We have to change the contract!”

(What are you saying? You want to suddenly change the contents of a contract that has already been thoroughly reviewed? Do you think this company is a playground?)

“Youngwoo-ssi wants ether diamonds!”

(What? A player knows about the ether diamond? Already?)

“Modify the contents of the rewards before Youngwoo-ssi signs it!”

It wasn’t too late. Shin Youngwoo had just entered the office. He would’ve shared a handshake with Yoon Sangmin and just received the contract. By now, he should’ve just read the first part of the contract. Yoon Nahee felt hopeful. However, Yoon Sangmin’s murmur over the phone took away her hopes, (...He has already signed it.)

“...!!”

He signed the contract without reading it...?

"...Ah." The nervous Yoon Nahee belatedly realized that this wasn't the first contract Shin Youngwoo had signed with the S.A Group. Before the 2nd National Competition, he signed a contract with the S.A Group and experienced the 'reliability' of the S.A Group.

'Then the reason he asked for a copy of the contract this morning...'

Yoon Nahee hung up the phone and shook her head.

"As the years pass, he is becoming harder and harder to deal with. The woman who gets him will suffer."

"It has been a long time."

"Nice to see you. I have been watching and cheering you on."

"Thank you. Please give me the contract. I assume it hasn't changed from the copy sent to me this morning?"

"Of course not. Check it once again and then sign... Excuse me, I have to pick up a call."

"I've signed."

"...???"

It happened in less than a minute. Shin Youngwoo laughed as he placed the fountain pen he received from his father back into his pocket. Meanwhile, Yoon Sangmin struggled to keep calm as he put away his phone. "You signed without reading it?"

"Didn't you say the contents are the same?"

"You never know..."

"It's okay. I already signed it."

"We can resign the contract if we both agree... Sigh, okay. I understand. There is no point feeling regretful since it has already happened. I have one question."

"What is it?"

"Why did you take the risk?"

"The risk?"

"You could've pretended not to know about the ether diamond and then signed the contract after carefully checking its contents. Why did you dare to tell Yoon Nahee about the ether diamond and create such an urgent situation?"

"I wanted to be sure."

"Sure?"

"I wasn't sure if I should choose the ether diamond instead of a divine creature byproduct."

“...Yoon Nahee’s reaction gave you confidence.”

“Yes. Her honest reaction gave me the answer. That’s why I signed this.”

“I see. You made the correct judgment. The ether diamond... To be precise, the value of the evil eyes’ king that can be exploited with the ether diamond is great.” The evil eyes were an advanced species. They were different from the inferior water clan. The king of the evil eyes would give Shin Youngwoo a power that couldn’t be compared to the water clan. “With this, Youngwoo-ssi can build a foundation to fight against the empire. However, don’t forget. It is just a possibility. The rewards will only be given based on Youngwoo-ssi’s and the four heavenly kings’ actions.”

The contract clearly stated:

1. Shin Youngwoo must participate in the ‘Demon King’s Subjugation’ event during the National Competition and play the role of the demon king.
2. The demon king’s role is to be hostile and overpower the players participating in the Demon King’s Subjugation event.
3. The S.A Group will support Shin Youngwoo.
4. The four heavenly kings are referring to the NPCs Piaro, Asmophel, Mercedes, and Noll. The range of the duplication is limited to their stats, skills, and items. Duplication of their personalities, memories, and emotions are strictly forbidden.

.....

.....

12. The S.A Group is obliged to pay Shin Youngwoo compensation whenever the number of kills accumulated at the gateways of the four heavenly kings increases by 100. Compensation payout will be given at the end of the contract.

13. If Shin Youngwoo survives until the end of the Demon King subjugation event, the S.A Group will give him compensation. Compensation payout will be given at the end of the contract.

14. This agreement is valid until the end of the 4th Satisfy National Competition.

Unlike Shin Youngwoo’s wishes, there were no special privileges. The S.A Group didn’t give Shin Youngwoo any special skills or items when he was the demon king. Shin Youngwoo had to fight against all those participating in the National Competition with his own abilities and the abilities of the four heavenly kings who cloned the stats of his subordinates.

It wouldn’t be easy. In particular, once the representatives of each country recognized the essence of the event and formed an ‘alliance’, the odds of the king being defeated would rise exponentially. Grid could gain up to seven rewards. Youngwoo would be able to monopolize more rewards than others could, but he was in a disadvantageous situation.

“Please play an active role and get the rewards you want.”

“Thank you for your support,” Youngwoo said goodbye to Director Yoon Sangmin and headed home. For the remainder of the time he had left, he was planning to build up his specs, make new items for his subordinates, and raise his level. In particular, he had to refine Noll who had been left unattended for a long time.

‘The National Competition now has a separate server. I can consume the creation slots at will.’

There was a chance of victory.

‘I will do whatever it takes to win.’

“Apart from the ether diamond, the list of rewards includes the Stone of Life, the prophet’s skull, the kelad cloth, and the yangban’s mask. Get rid of them”

Yoon Sangmin gave an order after Shin Youngwoo left. It wasn’t possible to change the compensation for Shin Youngwoo who had a separate contract, but the gold medal rewards were different.

‘We figured out the blind spots of the compensation thanks to Youngwoo-ssi. We’ve received his help.’ He tried to think positively, but a sigh emerged. Yoon Sangmin was already worried about the demon king project.

[Chapter 918](#)

[You have entered the Vampire’s Underground City (7).]

[The entrance of the dungeon is blocked. Contact with the outside world will be blocked.]

[The dungeon boss smells an intruder.]

[The dungeon boss has discovered your identity and hurriedly retracts his magic power.]

[The entrance of the dungeon is opened. The external barriers are removed.]

[The dungeon boss ‘Noll’ cries out to the city’s vampires.]

“He is my master.”

[The dungeon vampires are astonished.]

[They ask if he is stronger than the farmer.]

[The dungeon boss ‘Noll’ hits them.]

“Shut up.”

[The dungeon vampires close their mouths.]

[You control the Vampire’s Underground City (7).]

[This is the first time you have visited the dungeon after conquering it.]

[The dungeon information will be updated.]

[Vampire's Underground City (7)]

[Rating: S (Temporarily Downgraded)]

Boss: Noll

Monsters: Vampire familiars. Low-grade vampires, intermediate vampires, true blood vampires.

Monster Respawn Standby Time: 1 minute – 59 minutes.

Acceptable Monster Number: 10,890

-A dungeon where agriculture is actively developing thanks to the intervention of a legendary person. The dungeon is becoming a 'village' due to the agriculture phenomenon.

The vampires' hunger is at a low level due to eating the 'blood potatoes' that are being grown. The vampires in the city feel a faint appeal toward humans due to the influence of the boss 'Noll.' Once the dungeon's village is completed, the already spawned monsters will change to 'NPCs.' They will become your precious people.

* There are 159 days until the village is completed.

* Pray that as many monsters as possible are alive when the village is completed.

* The type of dungeon monsters might vary if the boss is changed.]

"What type of wind did you bring with you?" The boy who approached Grid had a beauty that went beyond human standards. Human modifiers could never describe the beauty of this boy. The vampire earl, Noll—he had been born directly from Shizo Beriache's body, and now he served Grid thanks to the effect of Pangea's Duke of Virtue.

[Name: Noll

Age: 221 Gender: Male

Species: Direct Descendant Vampire

Title: Fourth Child of Shizo Beriache

* Has inherited Beriache's attribute of compassion.

* Can use blood magic that has a beneficial effect on his allies.

Title: Vampire who has Overcome the Curse of Idleness.

* Has a strong desire for life. If his health falls below 10%, he will become a coward. He will lose his purpose and only strive to survive.

* Has a strong desire to broaden his horizons. He will actively want to learn.

Title: A Predator

* Once hungry, his true power will be exerted. The higher the fighting energy, the higher the abilities. The current hunger level is 4/10.

Level: 433

Strength: 3,621 (▼) Stamina: 2,567 (▼)

Agility: 2,310 (▼) Intelligence: 3,580 (▼)

Skills: Blood Farming (A), Direct Suppression (SS), Blood Transfusion (S), Blood Donation (SS), Blood Magic (S+), Run Wild (SSS)

* A child who Shizo Beriache especially loved.

Beriache was excited about the attribute of compassion sleeping deep in Noll's heart. She hoped he would give great strength to his brethren and overcome trials with his brethren.

Despite this, by now, most of his brothers have left the world. Noll considers Grid, who took off the Curse of Idleness and protected his life, as a replacement for his brothers.]

[Run Wild]

[The cooldown of all magic will be 3 seconds. However, mana consumption will double.]

Noll was the most special vampire that Grid knew. Perhaps he was even more special than his brother, Braham Beriache. He could heal and strengthen his colleagues, and he also had a wide area skill. Noll was stronger in a group than when he was alone. He was distinctly different from the other direct descendants who threatened humans alone. This 'difference' was sometimes a great strength. Grid relied on Noll. He didn't doubt that Noll was necessary for the future of the Overgeared Kingdom.

'His specs are still crazy.' Grid couldn't help smiling when he saw the Blood Farming skill that wasn't there before. He asked, "Why are you giving the cold shoulder to someone you haven't seen for a long time?"

"The problem is that you didn't come for a long time! You...! Do you know how much shame and humiliation I've experienced in the last two years?"

Noll's words weren't wrong. He had been 219 years old when Grid first met him, and now he was 221 years old. However, Noll still had the appearance of a 13-year-old boy, and a vampire's ego was influenced by their appearance. As such, Noll was a child. "You didn't come to see me...!"

"..."

"Considering I had to throw away my pride and serve a human, you should be visiting me often...!"

"..."

"I said I would serve you, not that crazy farmer! So why...?! Why did you let that crazy bastard...?!"

"I'm sorry." Grid grinned and stroked Noll's head.

'Piaro isn't a bad person, so don't hate him. He is teaching you to farm because he wants us to coexist.' Grid didn't say these words.

It was a fact that Noll already knew. Yes, this was just Noll acting spoiled. He wanted his 'brother' to protect him. So, he was venting about the 'brother' who neglected him.

“...Bad person.” Noll was no longer shouting. He blushed as he was reminded of his mother’s hand. It was the kind, soft, and warm touch of his mother who watched anxiously as he slept in his coffin. Grid’s hand was different from Noll’s mother, but it wasn’t bad.

“What? What crazy nonsense are you talking now?”

It was a castle where hundreds of coffins were displayed as ornaments. Noll sat at a long table opposite Grid and faced him. Red juice flowed like blood flowed from the potato Noll was eating. No matter how much he ate, it was fake blood that didn’t make him feel full. Still, it was precious food for vampires in the seventh city.

“Are you a fool?” Noll’s face distorted as he wiped the juices off his mouth with a handkerchief. “We are vampires. Among them, we—direct descendants—are perfect creatures. We can’t be described using the standards of a human. Yet you dare...”

“You are perfect despite sleeping all the time?”

“...It is true that the Curse of Idleness made us incomplete, but I overcame the Curse of Idleness. One day, I will destroy the great demons and God Yatan who dared insult my mother.” Noll’s anger was real. “I am complete. It is an insult for me to use these trivial tools!”

Grid said he would make a weapon and armor for Noll, who then felt insulted by the suggestion. Tools were things that weak humans relied on. This was what Noll thought. It was also why the vampires that Grid met previously hadn’t been armed. Some vampires might use tools like a ‘sword’, but that was just for their amusement. Vampires were beasts who preyed on other creatures using their natural physical abilities and magic power.

However, Grid thought it was mistaken idea. “Tools are trivial? A person who almost lost his life to a trivial tool is saying this?”

“...!” Noll closed his mouth, remembering how he had almost died from Grid’s sword and the crazy farmer’s equipment. “T-That...” Noll tried to defend himself with a red face, but it was impossible. He realized he wasn’t perfect and that tools weren’t trivial.

“What if you had armor at that time? Do you think Piaro’s hand plow, my sword, and Jishuka’s arrows could have beaten you?”

“...”

“Being overgeared is important. It is a concept that makes the strong stronger, not just the weak.”

“...”

“Noll, don’t be stubborn. The world where vampires can rely on their natural abilities is over. Do you like heavy armor or light armor? Think about which armor is more comfortable for you to use and answer me.”

All the legends had fallen asleep, and 200 years had passed. The world welcomed new legends, and those who reigned during the gap between legends became weak again. The relationship between Grid

and Noll represented this change. In the end, Noll lost his stubbornness and accepted reality. "...I would prefer armor like what you wear. Oh, I don't want to look at you or something like that."

"I understand. Your weapon will be a shield." Grid's voice was gentle and careful as he spoke to Noll. Grid's feelings toward Noll were very complicated. After all, he was the person who killed Noll's brothers. A vampire and human's thoughts were different, so Noll didn't resent Grid. Still, Grid felt sorry toward Noll.

"I'll make you a strong armor."

"Hmph, do whatever you want."

The first preparations were beginning. Grid would set up a new smithy here and produce items for Noll. Then the 'armed' Noll would be copied and become the 4th heavenly king of the National Competition.

"The protagonist is a blessed person."

They got overwhelming support from the audiences and readers.

"As long as the wishes of many people support the protagonist, the protagonist is bound to be strong."

Of course, this wasn't universal. The protagonist was sometimes weaker than everyone else. Why?

"The protagonist also suffers through trials. It is a fate that can't be avoided. Then the protagonist will become stronger after the trials."

At the S.A Group's New York branch, a man who was participating in the US representatives selection was talking to the other candidates. His name was Zibal.

"I have overcome the pain of my last trial."

He was the strong ranker who had once represented the United States, but he received the stigma of a punching bag after losing to Kraugel and Grid. Zibal declared, "I am the protagonist."

He had fallen to hell from the best place. Zibal was like a monk walking the path of penance. He endured the ridicule and contempt of the people and endeavored to overcome his limitations. Nobody could ignore him. People might not want to acknowledge him, but they had to respect him.

However, one person downplayed Zibal.

"No, I will be the new protagonist." It was Haster.

The appearance of an unexpected character shocked many people.

"Get out of the way, Zibal. I have to experiment with my strength."

Haster thought it was natural that he couldn't beat Grid at the present time. However, Hurent...?

Haster was someone who had beaten Kraugel. So, Haster felt there was something wrong. He needed to figure out what was wrong and fix it immediately. Then this person interfered, "Haster? Weren't you a pro golfer?"

“Pro gamer!!”

It was the punching bag Zibal.

[The selection will start soon. All candidates please enter.]

Unlike in other countries, this was a rare scene where many high rankers could be seen. Hundreds of strong players, including Zibal and Haster, were entering the preliminary elimination rounds.

[Chapter 919](#)

“What made you decide to naturalize?”

When Jair arrived in Australia, he answered questions from reporters. “I wanted to participate in the National Competition.”

Jair was ranked 1,071 on the overall rankings. He took pride in his skills and wanted to be a star like the high rankers. However, the United States was too big. The country was overloaded with strong and capable individuals, and Jair became weak in comparison. He didn’t even get elected as a representative. The ‘abundance’ of the United States had taken away Jair’s chance.

“Zibal? It has been a while.”

At the New York area selection round, hundreds of participants on stage were focused on Zibal. There were a variety of responses from the people. Those who recalled that Zibal had led the United States in the 1st and 2nd National Competitions welcomed him. Meanwhile, those who were disappointed that Zibal took the path of a hermit after facing several defeats frowned. Some people laughed or mocked him openly.

“Shouldn’t you retire after being called a punching bag? Why did you crawl back?”

“Don’t take away other people’s opportunities.”

There were even those who seemed hostile. Zibal humbly accepted all of it. He knew their hostility came from affection and expectations.

‘They are those who waited for me.’

Yes, the United States had been waiting. Zibal had been defeated by Russia’s Kraugel and South Korea’s Grid, but it hadn’t changed the fact that he was still one of the best talents in the United States. The American people had hoped he would play an active role again. They had wished the United States would once again be honored as the number one country in the 3rd National Competition. However, Zibal hadn’t responded to the people’s expectations. He had disappeared without a trace and turned away from the 3rd National Competition. Consequently, the United States lost its first place ranking.

The people felt as much betrayal as they had felt hope. As such, Zibal understood that they felt betrayed by him.

“In any case, we have Kraugel. We don’t need you!” A young ranker, who looked in his teens, cried out desperately. He was a boy who once dreamt of seeing America’s ‘captain’, Zibal. Yet the boy’s

expectations had been betrayed, and he resented the monster from the east, Grid, for trampling on the United States.

“Hrmm.” Zibal had already made a speech in the waiting room. He wasn’t kind enough to repeat the words to the candidates who used the other waiting rooms. After all, he just had to show his strength.

The first selection event was PvE. Zibal summoned the ‘Two-Headed Steel Chariot’ and smiled at the boy after trampling on the small creatures.

“The protagonist becomes stronger after overcoming ordeals. Kid, haven’t you seen it many times in movies?”

“Ah... Ahh...” The forgotten light of envy filled the boy’s eyes as he looked up at the chariot. All those who laughed or mocked Zibal were silent. Then the second monster wave appeared. The high-speed flying monsters surrounded Zibal. Their sharp claws aimed at Zibal, who seemed to be in a crisis because the chariot only showed its power on the ground.

Zibal just laughed at the monsters and summoned his second ride, “White Accelerator.”

It was a white lion with large wings. Zibal abandoned the chariot and flew into the sky. He used a huge trident and was able to penetrate through all the monsters. It happened in an instant. Zibal shouted, “The United States will win. I will make it so. I am different from the other losers who abandoned their country! I have overcome my ordeal and returned! I am the true protagonist!”

Zibal’s cry was enough to stimulate the black flame dragon Lael, who was watching in the distance. Certainly, Zibal was much stronger than he had been two years ago. He was unique even in the United States, which had humbled numerous strong people. Zibal was comparable to Kraugel of last year.

‘Maybe this year...’

‘The combined power of Kraugel and Zibal can beat Grid...!’

The American rankers, who still shrank back from the Grid they witnessed last year, started to feel hopeful.

“Victory will be made by me, not you. If you’re done then get out of the way.”

Step, step. A man pushed his way onto the stage. The young rankers didn’t recognize him, but those older than 20 were amazed and shocked.

“Haster!! It’s Haster?”

The emperor of FPS games—Haster was the mythical pro gamer who created the golden age for America. He was comparable to the Korean FaXer and Lim Xhan. The person who retired from the game world with the release of Satisfy was appearing here...? The emergence of the unexpected figure shocked people.

‘What is with all the fuss?’ The younger generation who didn’t know him felt doubts. Then Haster showed off the power of his unique class, Red Sage. The 1st and 2nd wave monsters were blocked by ice barriers and burned by flames. It wasn’t as exciting as Zibal’s display, but it was neat workmanship without any flaws.

'Pretty good.'

Skull and Zephyr watched Zibal and Haster quietly.

'However, that is all.'

Skull, 10th on the overall rankings, and Zephyr, 20th on the overall rankings—they had played for the United States in every national competition and knew the harsh reality.

'They shouldn't feel elated just by catching a few monsters.'

'They can never beat that monster.'

The monster was Grid. They had met Grid or seen him for three consecutive years and knew how steep Grid's growth curve was. It was a strength that extended beyond the concept of stats and skills. Rather, it felt like an evolution of a species itself.

'Grid has already surpassed the limits of a player a long time ago.'

'He is someone who has faced a dragon, not just these petty monsters. In order for us to win against South Korea, the United States needs a transcendent who is beyond the limits like Grid.'

Did they believe this transcendent person was Kraugel? Well, let's see? Most people didn't know it, but Skull and Zephyr clearly saw the difference between Grid and Kraugel. At last year's PvP finals, Grid hadn't used all his power, but he had broken Kraugel. The person who people had called the 'sky above the sky' for several years had been like a child in front of Grid.

'We should give up on the 1st place spot.'

Nothing would change even if Zibal and Haster came back. The presence of Grid meant the United States would forever remain in second place. Skull and Zephyr smiled bitterly as the gloomy reality filled their minds.

[The second test will begin.]

A new system message popped up, and a boss monster appeared. It was an earl grade direct descendant vampire—a monster known to be monopolized by the Overgeared Kingdom.

"I want food." The pale vampire revealed his sharp fangs as a bloody magic power swirled around him and took control of the stage. It was the manifestation of Blood Field, which weakened all players.

"Let's move." Skull and Zephyr rushed forward. In order to get a high score in a boss raid, they had to accumulate damage on the boss or pull the boss' aggro to survive. Skull and Zephyr had no plans to be eliminated in the selection rounds. However, they couldn't help freezing in place, while the other contestants stepped back or ran into them. The sky was suddenly filled with darkness and thunder. The thunder in the sky split apart.

"What?"

The participants were confused by this turn of events and cried out.

"A-Avoid it!"

A giant descended through a gap in the sky. It was close to five meters tall, and its white coating was reminiscent of a white dragon's scales. Someone muttered, "Gundam...?"

The emergence of something beyond the vampire earl wasn't in the participants' event information. The confused people scattered everywhere, including Haster.

'What is that monster?'

Mental Protection, the passive skill of the Red Sage, was being threatened by the descent of this giant enemy. Haster's legs were shaking, and he couldn't move. Haster bet that most participants were likely to be in a 'fear' or 'confused' state. What was the identity of the giant that threatened hundreds of rankers just by appearing? Except for one person, all of those present were overwhelmed.

"Come on, Raiders."

"...!"

The pressure was lifted the moment the giant appeared on the stage. Haster's legs stopped trembling while the other participants regained their freedom from the abnormal conditions. Zibal was boarding the giant.

[Synchronizing with Raiders.]

...

...

[Synchronization successful!]

[Raiders is operating!]

[The maximum mana is low!]

[The maximum time you can activate Raiders is 21 seconds.]

"I..."

[Blue Sky Rider]

It was the growth type unique class that Zibal managed to obtain after meeting the 4th imperial prince Edan and carrying out the class quest.

"I am the protagonist."

The presence of an artifact class item, Raiders, was enough to place Zibal as the protagonist as he claimed. The parthenon pillars fired and blew away one of the vampire earl's arms.

'Maybe...!' Delight filled the faces of Skull and Zephyr.

'Is this the Zibal that I knew?' Haster's eyes shook.

Additionally...

'The Saharan Empire...?' Lauel witnessed the symbol of the empire engraved on one side of Raiders' chest.

Now, they had a common idea, regardless of individual circumstances. The winner of this year's PvP event would be Zibal, and the United States would rise to the top again.

Simultaneously, in South Korea...

[Overgeared King Grid declares his non-participation in the 4th Satisfy National Competition.]

The breaking news from various media outlets caused a buzz among the people. The real-time search queries of the portal sites became filled with Grid, Shin Youngwoo, Overgeared King, and so on in less than one minute.

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

"Good."

Grid ignored the flood of requests for interviews and hammered an armor that closely resembled Valhalla of Infinite Affection. He was mentally and physically tired from working for a long time, but Grid forgot his fatigue once he confirmed the results.

[You have created a myth rated item!]

[* When myth rated items are produced, all stats will permanently rise by +20 and reputation throughout the continent will rise by +1,000.]

[Your reputation points has exceeded 200,000. It is recommended that you use the Reputation Store.]

[The blacksmith god Hexetia has praised you.]

[God Hexetia has given you a benefit.]

[Your dexterity has risen by 100.]

"Placing armor on this noble body... I don't like it but I will try it on now." Noll couldn't hide the joy of being with Grid for three days. His eyes lit up and he immediately wore the armor.

Grid nodded as he confirmed that Noll wearing the armor looked exactly like him. "It is like watching my childhood self."

Noll was like the star in a night sky while Grid was a pig's poop. The gap in appearance between the two people was this huge. Grid had no conscience when he said Noll reminded him of his childhood. However, Noll was pleased instead of offended.

[Chapter 920](#)

'It works better than I thought.'

Grid had the Minerals Strengthening skill. As the name suggested, it was a skill that could enhance the performance of minerals. It was a good skill just based on the description. However, its actual utility was low.

The weight of the materials which could be put into the 'strengthening frame' was limited to 30 grams, and it took 30 days to complete the strengthening. Grid had been strengthening blue orichalcum for the past seven years, but the weight of the strengthened blue orichalcum that he had secured was only around 2.5 kilograms. He needed 4 kilograms to make an average one-handed sword. Therefore, Grid couldn't get enough minerals to make a sword despite his seven years of investment. It was a skill that was virtually obsolete.

This was from before he met God Hexetia.

[Legendary Minerals Strengthening]

[-Strengthens the performance and durability of minerals by using the strengthening frame.

Mineral weight that can be placed into the strengthening frame: up to 1 kilogram.

Time needed for the strengthening: 3 days.]

The 'special event' that occurred when Grid produced the sixth myth rated item during his confrontation with God Hexetia was an upgrade to the Minerals Strengthening skill.

In fact, Grid hadn't been very happy. It was a skill that had unnecessarily occupied his skills window for seven years. He still didn't feel any appreciation for it now that the skill had been upgraded. However, Grid changed his mind after securing a large amount of strengthening minerals and using them in a set of armor for Noll.

'Good. I did well by strengthening the blue orichalcum and black iron.'

Black iron was one of the most commonly available minerals. There was a lot of demand for it, but it was a mineral that could be bought if there was money. On the other hand, the supply of blue orichalcum was so small that it couldn't be bought even with money. It had a better performance than black iron, and the Overgeared Kingdom had been monopolizing the blue orichalcum that was dropped from the Guardian of the Forest. The first result of the strengthened black iron and blue orichalcum was Noll's armor:

[Valhalla of Strong Trust]

[Rating: Myth

Durability: 1,745/1,745 Defense: 1,322

- * 30% increase in health recovery.
- * 20% reduction in damage from physical attacks and magic attacks.
- * Adds defense when dealing with multiple enemies (100 defense per five people)
- * 20% increase in physical defense and magic resistance in dark places.
- * The passive skill 'Immobile Fortress' will be generated.

-The armor that Grid, the legendary blacksmith who went against a god, made based off Khan's work.

The strengthened black iron covers the entire body while the steel plates made of blue orichalcum cover the shoulders, chest, and waist.

The owner of this armor will shine brilliantly in the darkness and will become the god of the battlefield spoken about for a long time.

Weight: 4,770

User Restriction: Level 400 or higher. 3,200 strength. 2,200 stamina.]

‘Unlike Khan’s Valhalla of Infinite Affection, this lacks the ‘birth background’ but it is myth rated. It is extremely durable and has high defense thanks to the strengthened minerals.’

It reflected the intentions of the maker, Grid.

Grid used the blue orichalcum in hopes of enhancing the racial traits of vampires, who ruled over the night. He also used some characteristics of Valhalla of Infinite Affection in hopes of strengthening Noll’s recovery ability. Additionally, he didn’t forget Noll’s potential to become stronger against a large number of prey and referred to the options attached to Dainsleif. The results were a boost to his blood absorption, increased defense in the dark, and increased defense when dealing with multiple enemies.

It was a new enlightenment for Grid.

‘Having a variety of production methods gives me a better understanding of various types of options and how to elicit them.’

In this sense, the benefit of having the Overgeared Guild was huge. They ran to Grid every time they got a new production method.

‘Come to think of it, I have been able to concentrate on various quests thanks to my colleagues... Unlike other blacksmiths, I don’t have to waste time finding production methods.’

Of course, it wasn’t a one-sided benefit. Grid steadily produced items for his colleagues, and the value was no less than the benefits that he obtained. Noll was hopping around. “Grid! Look at this! Haha! This armor is brilliant! It has a blue shine!”

“Yes. It is great.”

[Affinity with ‘Noll’ has risen by 20.]

The Valhalla of Strong Trust was worth billions of won. No, it was an item that could be sold for tens of billions of won. However, nowadays, Grid didn’t move for mere wealth. He was just happy to see his colleagues and subordinates rejoicing. Grid knew from experience that his colleagues and subordinates becoming stronger was worth more than money.

‘I’m sorry that the shield is only unique rated but...’

It was too unrealistic to make a legendary shield. Grid could be stuck here for several months if he clung to the ‘rating’ upon which luck had an effect but Grid was a busy person.

“Then I’m going.” Grid cleaned up his various tools and rose from his spot. Noll’s expression hardened as he spun around with the triangular shield in one hand. “You’re going already?”

“The shield took three days, and the body armor another three days. I’ve been here for almost a week already. I have to go back now.”

“I have lived for over 200 years.”

“Huh?”

“One week... is short.”

“...”

Noll’s small fingers grabbed Grid’s collar in a pathetic manner. It made Grid uncomfortable about leaving a young boy alone in this dark and desolate city. Still, he couldn’t afford to be sentimental. He had to check the statuses of Piaro, Asmophel, and Mercedes.

“Noll, you have to protect this place.”

“Why? Is it due to the fields? How much larger should I expand the fields?”

“I don’t know exactly. Just continue farming for the next 153 days. Once the fields expand to a certain size, it can be recognized as a territory and will belong to my kingdom.”

“153 days? I have to farm for 153 more days? I have to keep chewing on these potatoes?”

“Didn’t you say you have lived for over 200 years? Isn’t one week short? Then 153 days will go by fast.”

“One week and 153 days are different! This... After 153 days, can I follow you?” Noll stopped shouting and asked carefully. He seemed to want to be with Grid. In fact, Grid also wanted this. A strong NPC like Noll would be a great power for Grid. Lord would also be glad to have a male friend around his age...

There was one problem though. “Unfortunately, you are the only person who can rule this place. Most of my colleagues and subordinates are human and can’t live in an underground city. It’s getting hard for me to breathe just living here for a week.”

“Then what? I have to stay here all my life?”

“It can’t be helped. In any case, you can’t see the sun, right?”

“Bah, this body is made of pure blood. Sunlight somewhat restrains me, but... Wait. How about asking someone else to rule this place on my behalf?”

“Who?”

“A vampire like me.”

“Yes, but... don’t the other vampires sleep differently from you? I will tell you in advance, but someone who always sleeps can’t be the lord.”

For someone to be a lord, they had to exercise the minimum of operating skills. They had to develop the city and collect taxes. A lord with low intelligence or no ability to operate a city would ruin it rather than develop it. It was one of the reasons why Lauel was searching for talent every day. Noll made an angry expression. “Damn Yatan jerk...”

He hated the Curse of Idleness. However, it was still cursing a god, and Grid was relieved when he once again realized that Noll wasn't normal. The fact that he and Noll were on the same side was reassuring.

"Then I'm really going. Watch over the city well for 153 days. I want to accept your people as soon as possible."

The vampire cities were a rare hunting ground where vampire rings and elixirs dropped. While the Overgeared Guild controlled the vampire cities, the control wasn't perfect. Forces frequently invaded the cities without permission. They even hurt the Overgeared soldiers stationed at the city's entrance. As such, they were included in the main enemies that the Overgeared Kingdom had to deal with.

"Bah, you are the only human who can step onto my land."

"That's reassuring." Grid smiled and waved.

Noll watched Grid's retreating back and muttered in a small voice, "The armor and shield... Thank you."

It was the first time he had received a gift since he was born. He couldn't be ungrateful.

Sparks appeared on a straight path that had nothing left. They were the remnants of Draw Sword.

"Cough..." Blood flowed from Peak Sword's right arm as the sword returned to its sheath. It was due to the gauntlets he was wearing on his right hand.

[Blue Dragon's Gauntlet]

This was a gauntlet made from the Blue Dragon's Breath that Peak Sword obtained from the National Competition last year. It was an item which maximized the power of Draw Sword by greatly increasing attack power and attack speed, but the penalty was too much. The 'Lightning Speed' effect that had a certain chance of triggering doubled the power of Draw Sword in exchange for consuming 12% of the user's health and causing a 'one-arm fracture' for five seconds. A fracture was directly linked to a decline in combat power, so the activation of Lightning Speed was a double-edged sword.

'I wanted to increase the rating before the National Competition started...'

Last year, the gold medalists of the Overgeared Guild like Peak Sword and Yura received the sacred creatures' byproducts as Grid had advised. They had asked Grid to make items, but the results were all ranged from unique to legendary. Among them, Peak Sword's Blue Dragon's Gauntlet had a unique rating.

However, Peak Sword didn't feel too much regret. In the first place, he hadn't hoped for a myth rated item, and the rating of the Blue Dragon's Gauntlet was preceded with 'growth-type.'

Yes, the Blue Dragon's Gauntlet was an item that could grow to a minimum of the legendary level. If the rating increased, then it was likely that the penalty, which was the sole disadvantage of the Blue Dragon's Gauntlet, would be mitigated. In comparison to similar items, there was a lot more room to boost the Blue Dragon's Gauntlet performance, and Peak Sword was looking forward to it.

The problem was that the accumulation of item experience was going far slower than Peak Sword's expectations. Peak Sword had spent eight months raising the Blue Dragon's Gauntlet, and it was only at 20%. He had stuck to hunting grounds except for when he was doing quests.

'There is a reason why God Grid couldn't summon Elfin Stone despite a few years passing...'

Peak Sword recalled that God Grid had often said that a 'growth type item is truly X'. Then he recalled the news articles about Grid not participating in the National Competition that emerged today.

'By now, those scum will be swearing at God Grid, right?'

Peak Sword's affection toward Grid was close to infinite. The hero who had elevated his country's honor and helped him countless times... Peak Sword felt extreme admiration toward Grid and was disgusted with the people who swore at him. Every time he read an article criticizing Grid, he logged in with the Internet ID called 'Peak Dislike.'

"It can't be helped. I'll go and make a clean comment."

In any case, it was time to have lunch. He logged out without regret and turned into the head of the Patriotic Association, Kang Daehan. The real-time search queries were all about Grid. There were endless articles about Grid's declaration of non-participation in the National Competition.

Kang Daehan logged into the Peak Dislike account and clicked onto an article at the top of the rankings. He was ready to 'recommend' every comment sympathetic to Grid and 'report' every comment condemning Grid. However...

"These scum talking about things they don't know about... Huh?"

He sorted by recommendations and didn't find any bad comments about Grid.

-Being absent from the largest event held once a year...Perhaps God Grid has a problem with his health?! I'm really worried.

Recommendations: 21,034 Dislikes: 509

-I'm praying for God Grid's recovery.

Recommendations: 18,110 Dislikes: 288

-Grid should take a break once in a while...The spotlight and expectations of the people are on him every year, he must be burdened...I think it is good for him to rest for a year.It is a shame about the gold medal rewards, but rest is important.

Recommendations: 14,500 Dislikes: 1,209

-In my opinion, last year's Reinhardt invasion has a great influence.Immortal or other groups might invade Reinhardt if there are no Overgeared members there.Grid's idea is probably to prevent the same thing from repeating...Why isn't the S.A Group improving the system?The communication isn't good.

Recommendations: 13,990 Dislikes: 102

-I'm cheering on the Korean representatives! Please work harder for Grid who is watching from a distance!

Recommendations: 12,010 Dislikes: 93

"Wow..." Kang Daehan realized that he wasn't the only person who loved Grid. All Korean people cherished Grid. Of course...

[(Column) Grid is full.]

[We don't know the exact compensation that Grid gained from each of the past National Competitions. They were certainly a big help for Grid at the time, but they aren't items that will give a boost to the current Grid.

Grid is full.

The National Competition is only a waste of time for the present Grid. He has built up his own strength and isn't afraid to ignore the wishes of the people

He has abandoned his country and his people.]

This was the attitude of the experts. They needed stimulating material to attract the public's attention, and it was rare for Grid to have such inflammatory materials.

"These scum..."

Kang Daehan picked up his phone. He planned to exercise the power of the Patriotic Association.