

Overgeared 951

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

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

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

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

[Destroyed items will automatically be restored once the gate is breached.]

"Kuek...!"

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

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

"Cough, cough! No way...!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'...The lower her health, the higher the attack power.'

'She is a berserker.'

The west gate's guardian Benz...

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

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

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

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

Group B had 59 survivors. 41 players had died in just 20 minutes. They were the strongest people representing their countries, and they didn't die easily. Every time they hit Benz, the damage accumulated, and her health was now far below 70%.

'Just a little bit more.'

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

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

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

"Can you handle it?"

"Everyone here is excellent... There is also Teacher Peak Sword. I can hold on."

"Okay, I will focus on completing the dungeon."

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

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

However, Coke quickly became nervous. Engaging with a higher level opponent brought about a sudden drop in stamina. It would be dangerous if he didn't manage it properly. Additionally, the shock that was transmitted every time Benz hit his shield was too great. As Benz' health decreased and attack power increased, the priests healing Coke couldn't keep up.

"Coke!"

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

"...Sweet."

Due to his excited state, Iyarugt appeared in reality. The elderly horned demonkin enjoyed the air in his lungs as he looked at Mercedes. He was the strongest swordsman of hell who fought with great demons. Despite his weakened state, his senses were still sharp and he judged that Benz was strong. Thus, he didn't have time to savor the sweet air and swung his sword.

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

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

"What...?"

"T-This is ridiculous!"

The result was far below Group B's expectations. Benz used Noble Valor and Knight's Resolution to raise her defense to the extreme and still had 20% health left, despite being hit by the ranker's ultimate skills. Benz' armor was surrounded by a purple and red aura. Everyone was overwhelmed by the energy that reminded them of Grid's fighting energy.

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

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

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

[You can't resist.]

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

[You can't resist.]

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

'This...!'

'Grid's....!'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, the spectators and viewers saw it differently.

"Group B is too weak."

"It is the only group without an American ranker. There aren't many Overgeared members or Damian present."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“No, what is this...!”

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

“...”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'In the end, they will come all the way here.'

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

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

Ttang!

The cannon's barrel was completed. It was 40 minutes after the start of the event.

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

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

"Summoning the Reputation Store."

[A special service for only the best celebrities!]

A golden carriage fell in front of Grid.

"Waterspout."

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

"This waterspout...!" The players screamed as the waterspout rose into the sky and then fell. No, they swore. They were going crazy because they were harassed by bizarre skills such as Flying Pebbles, Clam

Digging, Crab Fishing, Drawing Octopus, Calling Seagulls, and Water Sediment. Now they were going to be crushed by a vortex of mud and seafood?

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

"This XX fisherman...! Uwaah!"

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

"..."

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

"...He is the person I know, right?"

The heavenly king called Cardin...

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

"...Then the Demon King?"

"Can't you guess?"

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

"Retrieve Fishing Nets. Shoot Ink."

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

"Threading Bait."

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

"Breaking the Shell."

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

'No, give up.'

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

'We will be given a chance to re-challenge.'

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

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

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

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

[The first challenge has failed.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If so, Grid absolutely wasn't a fool. He was a genius whose previous actions were all an act. Lim Cheolho shook his head. "It isn't what he intended."

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

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

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

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

“You must feel sorry.”

“What do you mean?”

“Grid (Demon King) will be defeated.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“You want to discard the other three teams?”

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

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

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

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

After all, two of the three Chinese representatives had been killed the moment the battle began.

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

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

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

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

People who liked intimidating the weak would just become cowards in front of a person better than himself. It was as expected.

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

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

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

"Okay."

Grid wasn't present, so Kraugel was the standard that everyone acknowledged. Once he agreed to the plan, no one opposed him. The 400 members joined their original groups and gathered in front of the gates they already failed to capture once.

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

"..."

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

“Eh?”

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

The Overgeared Guild had two top magicians. They were the wind magician Zednos and fire magician Laella. They always said to the magicians of the Overgeared Guild that ‘magicians must fight ugly.’ This meant they had to chant magic spells quickly. Believing in continuous spells like a shield and standing in place to cast spells faster was tantamount to suicide.

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

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

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

“I have to win a medal.”

The magicians muttered.

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

“I will do it properly.” Goshar made up his mind.

Then he reached out a hand to Peak Sword, who shook it. “Yes, let’s win.”

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

Over at Group D, Jishuka burned with fighting spirit once she discovered the guardian of the north gate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm sorry, Noll. I don't think I can send you off comfortably because you are too strong."

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

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

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

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

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

"They really are rankers."

"Yes. I didn't know it could be like this."

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Kobold of the North Gate has fallen.]

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

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

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

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

The first victory occurred 37 minutes after the battle commenced.

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

"Go! Jishuka!"

"Kraugel! Kraugel! Kraugel!"

"Peak Sword is so cool!"

"I want a magic machine!"

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

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[The North Gate Guardian has fallen.]

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

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

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

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

Prior to the National Competition, Grid had made the Valhalla of Strong Trust for Noll. The myth rated armor based on Valhalla of Infinite Affection had the effect of increasing health recovery, reducing the damage received and acquiring additional defense (maximum of 100) when facing multiple opponents. He could be called the strongest tanker among the four heavenly kings, yet he was the first to fall.

‘This is despite the title effect...’

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

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

“...Immobile Fortress became a poison.”

The passive skill attached to Valhalla of Strong Trust, Immobile Fortress. It reflected damage every time the armor durability fell by a certain amount and was a more useful skill than Moving Fortress in certain circumstances. That said, it did have a fatal weakness that made it impossible for the wearer to move when it was used. This was likely the part that caught Noll’s ankle.

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

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

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

This was conclusive proof that this Noll was a fake.

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

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

Grid kept thinking this as he controlled his heart.

“...”

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

'You jerk.'

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

'I can't make only one item.'

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

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

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

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

[The South Gate has been breached! The roar of the invaders has penetrated the battlefield!]

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

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

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

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

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

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

First of all, Grid naturally planned to purchase the Sweet Candy, which raised all stats by 30%. The Sweet Candy only lasted five minutes, but he could buy up to five. Thus, he would be able to maintain this top condition for 25 minutes. However, after thinking about it a bit more, he felt that this wasn't the best way.

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

[Draw! Draw! Draw it!]

[The random drawing machine!]

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

* Limited edition items aren't included.

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

Price: 999 reputation points.]

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

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

'Things are different now that I think about it again.'

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

"Go."

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

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

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

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

First, Grid needed confirmation. In the real game, reputation points weren't something that could be easily used. This was an opportunity to invest only in the random drawing machine. It would be a good

experience. Even if the result of the drawing was ruined, all his other preparations were complete, so he could perform the role of the Demon King sufficiently.

Grid made up his mind and pressed the button.

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

[...!!!]

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

[The Immediate Item Completion Scroll has been acquired!]

"...?"

Um, what was this? Did he see wrong? Grid was absent-minded for a moment and doubled checked the result again.

"...Umm."

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

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

『 The 400 players have breached all four gates! 』

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

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

The commentators of each country were excited, and people all over the world cheered. The 400 players' first and second challenges which took a total of 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete had been fierce and beautiful. Their journey was an unforgettable sight that settled deep within the hearts of the world.

『 Now, only the Demon King is left! 』

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“...”

No one was able to rush into the great hall. A music box was being played from deep inside the dark great hall. It was an instrumental song that greatly heightened the tension and anxiety.

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

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

“Let's do as Chris says.”

Close, compact formation...? Someone complained, saying it wasn't a real war. However, most players followed Chris' words. It was because they had gotten good results fighting the heavenly kings once they listened to his orders. Yes, now was the time for cooperation. They wouldn't be able to fight the Demon King by playing solo. The Demon King would naturally be stronger than the four heavenly kings.

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

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

“T-That's right.”

“Hahaha.”

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

“You're late.”

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

[The Demon King has appeared.]

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

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

“A cannon?”

“Kuoock...! Keep the formations!”

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

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

‘This guy?’

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

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

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

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

[Chapter 955](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Pinnacle Kill.’

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

“Death Penalty.”

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

[Critical!]

The death penalty became a reality. Seuron made a disbelieving expression as he turned to gray, and Grid calmly received the doubtful gazes. Although Seuron would never know, this was an act of forgiveness from Grid. He would forgive Seuron for spreading the rumor about hemorrhoids. Grid was truly generous.

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

"Crazy...!"

"Everybody stay calm! Surround him!"

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

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

'A fierce boss.'

'This is the real deal...'

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

'The name is completely different.'

Most of the named NPCs in Satisfy had gold names. However, the name 'Demon King' was a deep red color with gold framing. It felt extraordinary while giving off a sense of oppression.

"Scatter!"

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

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

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

It was originally the field magic called Storm Demonic Energy Field. The strong wind and rain caused players to slow down, while lightning fell continuously toward the players who couldn't escape from the area of the spell. The players tried to block the lightning with their shields or weapons, but it wasn't easy because the lightning acted like a magnet that pushed or pulled the items.

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

"Weldon! What are you doing?"

"Steady yourself!"

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

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

"Huong..."

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

'Is it bewitchment magic?'

'An incubus type? He looked cool from the beginning.'

'Shit, this is a headache.'

It was outside the field magic.

"Shit! Don't be absent-minded and use your shields!" Goshar shouted to the magicians as he protected Weldon by covering him with earth. Then the confused people started to move in the same direction. The melee used their ranged skills on the Demon King, while the magicians overlapped several layers of shields on their allies being attacked by the field magic.

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

“This...!”

“What damage...!”

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

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

“Fly Up!”

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

“Wah!”

The players and spectators had already witnessed the scene where Jishuka’s red phoenix had killed the heavenly king and rescued her allies. They didn’t doubt that Jishuka’s red phoenix would save the players who were trapped in the evil Demon King’s field. Yet...

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

‘You can’t go anywhere.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

『 Damian's buff is concentrated on Chris and Jishuka! Player Chris' sword tried to cut down the Demon King, but the Demon King avoided it! 』

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

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

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

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

『 Katz' bloody storm and Peak Sword are attacking the Demon King! 』

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

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

'It is a trap!'

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

-Kuhahahaha! The sound of the Demon King's laughter came from the other side. The players' gazes naturally turned toward that direction. They were baffled. The thought that the Demon King who attacked them was just a clone and that the real Demon King was the one laughing filled the minds of the players.

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

"I will seal one eye."

"...!?"

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

"Kneel Down."

The skill was originally named 100,000 Army Blockade Sword. It dealt 20% damage to all visible enemies and had the 'blockage' effect for three seconds. Blocked targets couldn't move, and their skills or magic would also be sealed off. The disadvantage was that it consumed fighting energy, but the Undefeated King's swordsmanship exerted great power when facing a large number of people and it now neutralized

all players. The melee fighters who were using skills and the magicians who were casting magic—they were forced to their knees simultaneously.

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

“Kuek...! Kuock...!”

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

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

“Let's compete in the final showdown.”

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

‘We will fight one on one.’

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

[Chapter 956](#)

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

“No!”

“Dammit!”

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

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

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

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

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

[You have suffered 5,900 damage.]

[You have suffered 7,990...]

[The attack has been blocked!]

[The attack has been blocked!]

[You have suffered 7,540 damage.]

[You have suffered 4,620...]

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

'I'm really going crazy!'

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

The players tried not to show it, but they were greatly agitated. Their skills were either blocked or dealt less than 10,000 damage. It was absurd. They used basic skills with a short activation time to track down the Demon King trying to escape. Even so, the monster didn't receive more than 100,000 damage...? Considering the fact that most players participating in the Demon King subjugation were using high strength unique weapons or legendary weapons, the Demon King's defense was too high.

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

"His stats are too high."

"Get out of the way!"

The players' momentum was dying down due to the high defense and fraudulent characteristics of the Demon King. At this moment, a white horse leaped across the rocks toward the Demon King in the sky. One of the 10 meritorious retainers of the Overgeared Kingdom was sitting on the white horse. He had curly hair, a neatly arranged beard, and eyes deeply set in bronze skin. It was the emergence of Pon, who had been popular for a few years with his typical South European good looks.

"I will go with full force, so be careful."

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

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

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

[You have suffered 41,300 damage!]

"Kuek...!"

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

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

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

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

Grid avoided some of the wyvern's breaths pouring from above and turned like a spinning top. He aimed his weapon at the eight players who took the lead to jump off the ground after Pon.

"Tear Apart." (Link)

"...!"

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

"Cough!"

"Cough...!"

The eight players had believed they could do it after seeing Pon's great leap against the Demon King. Nonetheless, they were hit by the Demon King's great blow and turned to gray. A large amount of blood spilled out as they died and froze on the ground. The commentators were in a stupor.

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

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

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

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

『 Um...? No, this...? 』

『...』

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

‘...Grid?’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Even so, it is a bit disgusting.”

“Yes. The other players are cooperating with each other while he is being blatantly greedy alone...”

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

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

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

『 Ahh! The players have started fighting back! 』

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

“Blood Spear.”

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

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

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

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

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

[Resistance has failed.]

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

The pegasus had the peculiar nature to consume the resources of all enemies within a certain range while hindering recovery. This was a big threat to Grid. The benefits that Grid gained as the Demon King were his health and stamina. There were no mana-related benefits. The pegasus was a big threat to Grid, whose skills consumed a large amount of mana.

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

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

[You have suffered 61,700 damage!]

Jishuka's arrow pierced Grid's thigh and made him unable to trigger Revolve in time. This meant he suffered a severe blow. Chris swapped between Grid's Greatsword and Yetima's Greatsword while activating the power of a Tyrant. This made his strength comparable to Grid's. The players confirmed that the Demon King's health gauge was reduced by one-tenth and felt hopeful.

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

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

Five minutes...

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

[Cannon Aiming at the Battlefield]

[Rating: Legendary

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

* Takes 1–5 minutes to automatically generate, load and fire shells. The longer the time it takes to create a shell, the greater the attack power.

* Additional 50% lightning damage.

* Additional 10% divine damage.

* Additional 50% damage to humans or humanoid monsters.

- * Additional 200% damage to facilities such as walls.
- * Splash damage equivalent to half the damage will occur in a 10-meter radius around the firing point.
- * There is a certain probability of generating a magnetic field at the moment of firing.

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

Astaroth's Horn was combined with the Enhanced Blue Dragon's Breath to act as shells while the pavranium operate the cannon itself.

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

Conditions of Use: Grid, Pagma.

Weight: 6,150]

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

"Shoot!"

"...!?"

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

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

"Zibal!"

"...What?"

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

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

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

"Crazy!"

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

“Scatter.” Then the Demon King sent out a dark wave of energy that caused all players to retreat, and he focused his eyes on Raiders. “Baal’s Eyes.”

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

[The Item Replication skill has been activated!]

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

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

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

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

A mount... In order to use an item that was unfamiliar to him, Grid freed a power that he had never used before.

“Soul Redemption.”

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

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

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

“Ah... Ahhh...”

The world became distressed.

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

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

“Go, Zibal!”

“Zibal! Please win!”

“Zibaaaaal!”

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

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

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

'I must win the gold medal!'

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

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

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

"Eh?"

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

"What is this...?"

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

-Hello?

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

The Demon King drove the world into chaos.

"Isn't that just like Zibal's magic machine?"

"It is the magic machine summoned by the Demon King. It won't be weak."

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

'Grid isn't the Demon King?'

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

'But Grid doesn't have a magic machine...?'

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

"...How embarrassing." Pon covered his hot face with his hands. He was embarrassed at the memory of how he had shouted at the Demon King because he thought the Demon King was his close friend, Grid.

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

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

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

It was a shout toward the Demon King. He had two golden horns and eyes filled with emerald light, a five-meter-tall height, and a body structure reminiscent of a human's. Unlike the pure white Raiders summoned by Zibal, the Demon King's magic machine was black. Otherwise, the appearance was completely in line with Raiders. Starting from the magic power booster in the back to the tip of the head and down to the toes. Every structure was exactly the same as Raiders.

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

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

Zibal was confused. Then he became offended. For Zibal, Raiders was his soul companion. This thing dared to look exactly like his partner. Zibal flew into a rage just seeing it stand beside an AI. They dared to grant this ability to the Demon King...? Zibal thought the S.A Group didn't respect him. However...

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

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

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

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

Zibal made a decision. In order to overcome the S.A Group who doomed him and Raiders, Zibal was filled with a sense of duty to defeat the Demon King.

"Everybody should've already noticed, but the magic machine is a mount!"

"..."

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

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

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

'Or he is confident that he can grow it even further.'

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

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

"The magic machine can't operate unless the person boards it directly. Additionally, mana is rapidly consumed because it is a magic machine that runs on mana. Even the 10 great magicians on the continent can only run the magic machine for three minutes. Increasing the operating time with Mana Drain? It is possible. However, the passenger can't use any skills or magic when boarding the magic machine."

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

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

Now was the key. Zibal decided to reveal only one of the magic machine's physical weaknesses to the world. "Keep your distance as much as possible and attack the boosters in the back. You can't break it because of its high durability, but whenever a booster is attacked, the mana's trajectory will shift and the movements will be constrained. Relentlessly target the booster."

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

'I praise you for revealing your weaknesses to everyone.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The players' cries were heard all over the battlefield:

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

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

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

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

'Move, Demon King.'

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

“Huh?”

“...What is this?”

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

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

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

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

“Can you use magic?”

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

-Mana Drain.

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

The mana wandering in the atmosphere and the mana permeated the earth was absorbed by the dark magic machine. It was an output that far surpassed Raiders'. The amount of magic power in the boosters was three times that of Raiders. The result this produced was that the boosters became three times faster.

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

“Why aren't you hitting anyone?”

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

“...Geez, this is great.”

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

“Divinity. Baal's Eyes.”

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

[The Item Replication skill is activated!]

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

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

"No XX, what is this?"

"That jerk has no conscience!"

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

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[Magic Machine: Raiders]

[Rating: Artifact]

Durability: 12,540/15,888

Attack Power: 13,888 Defense: 9,888

- * The skills of the passenger who is of a class other than a 'rider' class don't work with Raiders.
- ★ Knowledge that transcends the concept of eras has changed the imprint. The passenger's intelligence level is linked to Raiders.
- * Raiders consumes 988 mana per second. A rider class passenger will have 588 mana consumed per second. Raiders will stop and be forcibly recalled the moment the passenger's mana is exhausted.
- ★ Knowledge that transcends the concept of eras has changed the imprint. The passenger will have 2,964 mana consumed per second, and Raiders' output will be three times higher than before.
- * The passenger's consciousness and mana are focused on maneuvering Raiders. As a result, the passenger can't use their own abilities such as magic or skills.
- ★ Knowledge that transcends the concept of eras has changed the imprint. The restriction on the use of unique abilities such as magic and skills has been lifted. However, there is a high risk of the connection with Raiders being interrupted when using a resource-intensive ability.
- * The occupant can't be harmed until Raiders' durability reaches zero. Raiders will stop and be forcibly recalled the moment the passenger's mana is exhausted.
- * The number one weapon 'Spear Calling Out for Destruction' has a hard to quantify weight. After attacking, there is a 95% chance to cause a fracture or stiffen the target. Additionally, there is a 100% chance of greatly reducing the item durability of the target.
- * The number two weapon is only available to riders who have acquired the highest grade riding skill.
- * The number three weapon information is only available to passengers who can fully synchronize with Raiders.

- * Raiders is resistant to abnormal status conditions (apart from physical conditions).
- * There is a 40% reduction in damage from magic and siege weapons.
- * 150% additional damage to buildings such as walls.
- * 80% additional damage to all races apart from gods and dragons.

The Saharan Empire has mined four magic machines. There is very little information about the ancient artifacts that are hard to find in history and mythology.

Boarding Conditions: Level 300 or over.

Weight: Measurement isn't possible.]

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

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

After level 300, one point in the strength stat increased attack power by 0.7. The attack power of the +4 Enlightenment Sword was 4,611. After level 300, one point in the stamina stat increased defense by 0.9. The +3 Valhalla had 1,622 defense. Even if he combined all of this with his helmet, gloves, shoes, and cloak, Raiders' attack and defense were twice as high as Grid's.

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

'The empire has four of these things?'

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

'Still...'

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

'I have to fight.'

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

"Fly Up!"

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

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

'Please, just survive one blow.'

This was Coke's attitude.

"I will be a barrier to defend my allies!"

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

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

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

"Wow, he is the real thing."

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

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

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

The red phoenix seemed like it was alive. It seemed to prove the fact that the Demon King's skill level was much higher than Jishuka's skill level. The red phoenix fell over the heads of the tankers and killed more than ten magicians. This was the power of being overgeared. Grid used the Elf Thimble which changed non-targeted attacks to a targeted attack.

"How can that son of a bitch shoot so well?"

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

'What is the point of there being no Grid?'

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

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

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

"Our first priority is dealing with the magicians."

The problem was the magicians. Grid had just killed 10 of them, but there were still around 70 people remaining. Their spells to restrain Raiders were a threat. Raiders turned away from Jishuka and rushed forth. Once the giant with a leg length of three meters moved at triple the output, it crossed a distance of several hundred meters in an instant. The giant crossed the burning battlefield, and the magicians scattered in a frightened manner. Despite this, there were no casualties.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

-Fireball!

"What...?!"

Many large fireballs were created over the head of the magic machine, and the doubtful players once again turned their eyes toward Zibal.

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

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

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

『 Hup...! 』

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

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

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

-Wind Cutter!

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

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

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

『 It is a large-scale tornado magic that uses the spell Wind Cutter as a basis. It is the most powerful spell known to turn an area into a wasteland in no time! Hundreds of years ago, the legendary great magician Braham used it to destroy the Etel tribe...! 』

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

-Chain Lightning!

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

“A-Avoid it!”

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

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

Even the legendary great magic (?) was defeated by the orange shield around Haster. He pierced through the continuous spells and arrived at the magic machine that was emitting black smoke from being overloaded. This National Competition would be his brilliant debut. He would use the National Competition as a foothold to regain his former glory. The Demon King event was a great opportunity for what Haster planned. If he managed to deal a big blow the Demon King, his presence would be deeply ingrained in the world.

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

[You have suffered catastrophic damage!]

[You have died.]

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

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

"You are on the same train as me, and you aren't a match for him."

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

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

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

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

"Are we going to lose?"

"Of course. How can anyone beat that?"

Haster's useless death was the breaking point for the hopes of the viewers. Now, the people had reached a stage where they thought it was impossible to beat the Demon King. Hundreds of millions of viewers watched and sympathized with the players who were like clowns against the 'undefeatable' enemy.

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

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

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

"The cannon bombardment interval is exactly five minutes."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There are 300 of us, 300. If we all accumulate thousands of damage per person, we can consume the two million health."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Grid's clone copied Grid's items. He might've gained a hidden piece to copy items after killing the clone."

"Combination, transformation, and now copying?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

[The Hermes Shoes have been equipped.]

[Skill Enhancement has been used.]

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

[The Valbun Sword has been equipped.]

...

...

The rankers brought out items purchased from the Reputation Store. They were items which they had bought with the four heavenly kings and the Demon King in mind. The rankers' reputation points weren't as high as Grid's. They were limited in comparison, so the rankers had to be more cautious about using them.

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

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

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

[You have suffered 230,900 damage!]

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

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

"Blood Rain."

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

The fallen Demon King couldn't stand up easily, and the players' momentum skyrocketed. As they fought hard, the dungeon produced by Eat Spicy Jokbal was nearing completion. In the middle of the battlefield, Eat Spicy Jokbal was setting up a small fortress which would increase his teammates' recovery while blocking the artillery shelling.

"Huhu, the flow has changed completely."

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

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

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

The executives who didn't know the identity of the Demon King were excited. In particular, the heads of the affiliated companies conducting events related to the National Competition were excited.

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

'There is no meaning if he loses.'

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

"Tsk."

A loser couldn't be raised as the group's signboard. There was a half-gray mask covering the Demon King's face, and Lee Jinmyung clicked his tongue as the cracks in it started to run red with blood. It was regrettable that he had missed the big fish called Grid, but Grid was too terrible.

'He made a promise he couldn't keep.'

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

『!! 』

『 No...!! What...!! 』

"...?" He was lost in his thoughts when he was interrupted by the commentators' shouting. Chairman Lee Jinmyung couldn't fully understand what they were talking about or what was happening on the screen. He rubbed his cigarette onto the ashtray as the surprised cheer of Daejin Motors' president entered his ears.

"Yes!!"

"...?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Yes, I can borrow the power of my outstanding grandson.’

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

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

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

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

Grid was certain. On this favorable terrain, Jishuka was strong enough to be the most revered person. She had been maintaining the best form for many years and had finally reached the realm of the sky above the sky. Jishuka was truly an amazing person. It was encouraging that she was his friend and colleague. On the other hand—

‘Yura.’

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

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

His insight stat and the Slaughterer’s Eye Patch gave him a warning. However, he couldn’t prevent Chris’ attack. It wasn’t enough to cope with the attack of the 1st ranked player and one of the 10 meritorious retainers of the Overgeared Kingdom. Grid was thrown by Regas, stabbed by Pon, and cut by Damian and Peak Sword...

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

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

'I was too prideful.'

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

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

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

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

[You have suffered 3,900 damage!]

[You have suffered 10,040 damage!]

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

[You have received the abnormal condition 'bleeding.']

[You have resisted.]

[Due to the title effect of First King, the Great King's Dignity has been activated.]

[You have counterattacked and reflected the status condition.]

[You have suffered 2,730 damage!]

[You have suffered 5,800 damage!]

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

...

...

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

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

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

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

"..."

The shield had bought Grid some time. Grid calmly checked his condition while taking into account Tiramet's power. He had enough mana to use Transcended Link after linking up Freely Move and Fly. The combo of these three skills could save Grid from the immediate crisis and slaughter dozens of players.

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

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

In the end, mana was a problem.

'Alarm isn't ready yet.'

Grid had roughly predicted when the four heavenly kings would be broken through, but he hadn't been able to grasp it perfectly. Thus, he had set the linked Alarm and Magic Missile as late as possible. He couldn't depend on them yet.

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

'It is too premature.'

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

[You have suffered 23,000 damage!]

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

His distinct half-mask that was covered in red—the mask originally named Bizarre Mask was gaining more and more cracks in it. The blood leaked through the cracks and cooled Grid's face.

'This...!' Grid's heart started to thump.

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

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

'The power of lies?'

Grid was reminded of a power he had been ignoring. The battle between Kraugel and the Hero spread like a panorama in Grid's mind, inspiring him deeply. The Hero had taken advantage of the power of lies and shown how to utilize a skill using multiple clones.

'However, I won't use it that way.'

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

'Nevertheless, I have something better than the Hero.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

Skill cooldown time: 10 minutes.]

'I can do it.'

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

'Blackening. Belial's Power.'

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

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

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

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

[You have chosen the power of illusion!]

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

"This?" The players' face paled with terror. They could see the Hero's appearance in the Demon King.

"Spread out! Hurry!" Chris hurriedly shouted toward the players.

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

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

The international commentators stuttered.

-What?What is this?

-Don't tell me...

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

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

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

"Heok! Hey, let me go!"

'What if I don't want to?' Grid grinned as he whispered into Chris' ears in a frightening manner, "Impregnable."

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

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

“Griddddd!”

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

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

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

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