

Overgeared 991

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“You chose your own destiny. Okay. If this is Your Majesty’s will, I won’t stop you. My king, I—
Poriororderporonopitonojiodebe—will implant an evil eye in you.”

Why was it that ‘Evil Eyes’ King’ floating on top of the king’s head instead of his real name? Grid had been secretly wondering, and now he knew why.

‘Is there a character limit?’

It was also difficult to remember. Let’s assume he didn’t hear the real name. “Please implant it in my left eye.”

“I understand. Don’t let the weight of your new destiny crush your soul.”

It happened while Grid’s hands and feet were curling up, cringing at the line. The evil eyes king covered Grid’s left eye with his small hand.

‘What type of evil eye will it be?’

Grid’s heart thumped. Believing in his good luck, Grid was 80% expectant and 20% anxious. He hoped that the evil eye would be the best one for him.

[The evil eyes king has used his power!]

[The evil eyes king will try to transplant an evil eye into you!]

[The system will analyze your game history and patterns. The current progress is 3%, 4%, 7%, 11%...]

‘The evil eye’s ability is closely related to the nature of the person it is being transplanted into...?’

The system seemed to grasp the player’s tendencies based on an analysis of their history and patterns before giving them the evil eye that best suited them.

‘It is a very good sign.’ Grid was a legendary blacksmith who made more than 700 types of items and had a lot of combat experience. The evil eye given to him couldn’t be ordinary. ‘I will obviously get the best one.’

Grid’s expectations grew even greater. However, it was only for a moment.

[The current progress is 39%.]

‘...Wait.’

Grid’s expectations, which had soared to 90%, fell to the depths of hell. Looking back at old memories, he realized there were too many wrongs related to his ‘deeds.’ In particular, the early days before he became Pagma’s Descendant were a problem. Eating, acting, fraud, arson, violence, deception, cursing, and so on—the evil deeds he had committed during his immature days almost exceeded the capacity of his brain.

‘I have committed too many wrongs...!’

The most disturbing part was the massive amount of swearing directed toward the operators. If he listed all the profanity in print, it could fill 1,000 pages. It seemed to go beyond two volumes of books.

'D-Don't tell me there is something like a swearing eye?'

Dammit! What if he had to swear every time he used a skill? Would he have to shout it out? Just imagining it was terrible.

'Still, the performance should be good.'

In his prime, Grid was a master of swearing who was even greater than Huroi. After all, Huroi used irony to ask about the parents of others, but Grid was different. It was possible for him to spit out a limitless amount of curses without being exhausted. If Grid had a swearing eye, the enemy's mentality would quickly be devastated.

'However, it is a bit wrong.'

No matter how good the performance, it was counterproductive if it ruined his image. It would have an adverse effect on the Overgeared Guild and Overgeared Kingdom if he obtained this type of evil eye.

'I can't get the swearing eye.'

[The current progress is 54%...]

Was it because his gameplay duration was too long? Or were there too many incidents in the game? The system's analysis of Grid's history and patterns was slower than expected. Despite this, Grid thought it was a good thing. He was able to calm his mind during this time.

'As the saying goes, imagination can become reality. Let's think positively, think positively.'

Grid had a close relationship with fire. He was always using fire when producing tens of thousands of items. It would be good if he got something like an ignition eye.

'Pagma was said to be the Duke of Fire, and I am qualified as his descendant... Ugh.' Grid stopped thinking and closed his eyes for a moment.

As the progress of the analysis exceeded 80%, a large number of notification windows started to emerge.

[Currently trying to grasp your essence based on your history and patterns but there are too many conflicting intentions.]

[Since it is judged that your essence can't be determined with just history and patterns, an algorithm will guess your goals and desires.]

[You have too many goals and desires!]

[You aren't suitable for many evil eyes!]

[The current progress is 95%... 100%.]

[It is concluded that you can't be defined.]

[Potential system error. Your achievements needed to be reviewed in detail for reconfirmation. Understanding the type, contents, and process of your achievements.]

[You have too many achievements!]

[Morpheus' main server needs to intervene to properly analyze you and decide what evil eye to implant in you.]

The evil eye was a force closely related to 'essence.' Due to its nature, Grid had to face the contents of terribly realistic notification windows.

'What supercomputer can't properly analyze the data of one player?'

It was such a ridiculous development that he was speechless! A new notification popped up as Grid was clicking his tongue.

[Completed the search for the evil eye closest to your essence.]

"...!" It was finally here. Grid was nervous. Then small sparks appeared around his left eye. The colour of the iris turned red. The shadows seemed to split in half around the small point of the pupil.

"Heok! T-This eye...!"

As Grid's eye was changing, the evil eyes' king grasped the identity of the evil eye and was astonished. Grid was also astonished.

[The evil eye transplant is successful!]

[You have obtained the castration eye due to your selfish greed!]

"Is this a joke?!"

Castration? Was this a 19+ game? Grid felt an instinctive reluctance and fear. He was so upset that he forgot to wear an eyepatch. Grid wanted to be sick. The fact that he could castrate the evil eyes' king in front of him gave him goosebumps.

"I won't allow your comfort."

Grid was hurriedly putting on the eyepatch only to harden like ice. He was greatly embarrassed about the phrase spoken when the evil eye was activated, only to realize the evil eye didn't affect the king.

'It is impossible to damage the king of the evil eyes with an evil eye?'

Or was it that 'castration' wasn't actually castration? As the evil eyes' king looked confused, Grid sighed with relief and checked the detailed information of the castration eye.

[Castration Eye]

[-A type of evil eye.

Blocks some of the beneficial effects of the target watched.

There is a high chance of blocking the beneficial effects of an atrocious target.

However, the target must be within 12 metres.

Resource Consumption: 500 Mana.]

“...!?”

Grid was astonished. It was because he was well aware of the meaning of ‘beneficial effect.’ Beneficial effects were all phenomena related to ‘luck.’ In terms of combat, there was the critical hit rate, the evasion rate, the accuracy rate, the defense rate, resistance, and item acquisition rate. Non-combat related effects were item enhancement success rate, production success rate, hidden piece acquisition rate, quest acquisition rate, and so on.

Those were the only things that came to Grid’s mind right now. All phenomena related to beneficial effects were so diverse that it was difficult to manually mention them.

‘The power to block positive odds...!’

This was a big hit, a great jackpot. It might not have an immediate dramatic effect like weakening or strengthening the target, but it blocked the variables. Additionally, it was possible to ruin a particular target. For example, if a competitor was raiding a boss monster, he just had to watch them to lower their odds of succeeding.

‘Wait. Then will I do a team kill?’

Grid imagined raiding with his teammates only to be called a troll. He thought about it for a long time before his expression distorted.

‘I thought it was great, but the constraints during group activities are too big.’

It was too bad. He didn’t seem to have received the highest-grade evil eye. Grid was complaining when the trembling voice of the king entered his ears.

“I-If you can’t see how great the c-castration eye is...”

“...”

The evil eyes’ king was someone who understood the principle of the evil eyes. Grid felt like he was naked in front of the king. He was worried that the evil eyes’ king would see his lowly jealousy and be disappointed. However, there was no need to worry. The evil eyes’ king was a demonkin who wasn’t hostile to humans. He peeked at Grid’s essence and felt great joy. “The demon-like being whom I chose as my king! My king, who is only generous to me! I feel infinite respect and trust in your selfishness and greed!!”

“Y-Yes. It is great.” The praise caused Grid to sweat, and he went on to exit the smithy. He still had some things remaining on his schedule. Damian had tried to help Agnus at Lauel’s request but lost his way. Then Grid heard from Lauel that Damian was visiting the Overgeared Kingdom.

Regas applied for a duel with Damian, and the guild chat window was already in an uproar, causing Grid to rush to the training field. He couldn’t miss the opportunity to watch the duel between the top talents.

By the time he arrived, the duel was in full swing. Damian was wrapped with all types of buffs as his sword cracked the ground. Meanwhile, Regas' splendid combos aimed at Damian's loopholes. The two people smashed against each other in the air before falling apart. Damian fell toward Grid's side.

"I won't allow your comfort."

"Huh?"

There was one part that Grid overlooked. The trigger of the evil eye was the 'owner of the evil eye looking at the target.' Even if he didn't see the target's eyes, the opponent was seen by the owner of the evil eye. Trying to hide the evil eye with the Slaughterer's Eye Patch meant that nothing was blocking the evil eye's view. Ether was also necessary for Grid.

[The castration eye has been activated.]

[Blocking all beneficial effects of the target!]

[This effect is retained while watching the target.]

"...!?" Grid was embarrassed, and Damian was astounded. Grid realized that his evil eye had blocked Damian's 'possibilities' while Damian made a ghastly expression as he stiffened like a stone statue. Regas' kick struck the back of Damian's head like a thunderbolt. It was a rapid attack, but it couldn't hurt Damian in his full buff state. Regas' real damage came from the combo damage accumulating.

Then Damian collapsed from Regas' kicks. He stretched out on the floor like a dead frog.

"...!?" Regas' legs pierced the air at the unexpected reaction.

'Is there a trick at this timing?'

Damian just used his buffs, so how could he suddenly be weak? The intentions were obvious, but the acting was perfect. The kicking damage was actually three times greater than expected.

'Did he instantly release his equipment and lower his defenses? Did he pretend to release his buffs to lower my guard?' Regas recovered his fist and thought about it as he relaxed his shoulders. Damian was still lying on the floor. He was full of obvious loopholes. Regas could likely win right now if he rushed over and attacked. However, Pope Damian wouldn't reveal such obvious loopholes.

'He is inducing my carelessness. The damage will be reversed if I approach him.'

The acting was so blatant that it made him think more deeply. Regas raised his concentration to the maximum while maintaining his distance from Damian. He checked the cooldown of his skills while trying to predict Damian's next move. This was called shadow boxing. Meanwhile, the Overgeared members didn't notice the situation and were still cheering for Regas and Damian. Of course, Grid was among them.

"Damian, what are you doing? Get up and fight!!"

"..."

Grid was cheering for a person after turning him into this state? Damian was upset. He kept lying down like a dead frog and was convinced that he was hated by Grid. In a sense, the pope had greater authority

than the king of a nation. He, who was respected by everyone, shed silent tears. Damian was very sad, like a five-year-old child whose mother refused to buy him a toy or a cow that had been castrated. Thinking he was hated by Grid, a huge sorrow and fear filled Damian, making him act as if he had lost the world.

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[All your beneficial effects are blocked!]

[All buffs that are in effect have been turned off!]

Grid emerged outside the battle while wearing an eyepatch. Damian fell into a sense of helplessness as their eyes met. It was a sense that his very existence was denied. Everything was empty. That's right. Buffs were a typical beneficial effect that weren't safe in front of the castration eye. There was the premise that it was subject to 'probability', but the castration eye was clearly one of the best evil eyes.

Grid was shocked after finding out about Damian's situation. 'Wiping out buffs that have already been applied...?'

It wasn't that he didn't think of the correlation between beneficial effects and buffs. He just didn't expect it to delete buffs that were already being applied.

'Great...'

500 mana was consumed when the evil eye was activated. The Slaughterer's Eye Patch couldn't control the evil eye. In fact, Grid was very frustrated because of these two difficulties. Now, this was enough to overcome the disappointment. No, he was excited to realize how lucky he was. Grid shook as he was given a distinct sense of purpose.

'I should get more Ether Diamonds.'

It was originally a production material. In order to properly use the evil eye, it was better to acquire them. He already knew how to get the Ether Diamonds. The Elliter Mine of Talima was where the Ether Diamonds were sleeping. The reliability of the information was 100% since Kraugel had provided it personally. Grid could go there if he wanted to collect Ether Diamonds. The problem was the fact that it was a forbidden zone.

'Great demon's hand...'

It was also the hand of the 12th great demon. According to Kraugel's report, one of the 12th great demon's hands was more powerful than the 33rd Great Demon Belial.

'I must raid it.'

There was a need to spur his growth. The dragon's blessing, the enlightenment effect, and experience buff potions meant that Grid had raised his level to 389 from hunting, but this was still insufficient. He had to achieve level 399 and gain the 200,000 Great Swordsmanship. Then he had to achieve level 400 and gain the fourth stats awakening. These were the minimum conditions needed for Grid to challenge the mine.

'I also have to increase the entire power of the Overgeared Guild.'

Grid looked at his colleagues gathered in the training field. One month had passed since the end of the 4th National Competition, but the armed status of his colleagues hadn't changed much.

'I'll have to slowly make items one by one. I'll also get them the evil eye.'

The moment Damian gave up the duel halfway, Lauel's eyes were shining like a dog in front of a snack. If he had a tail, it would be wagging restlessly.

'Lauel has already noticed.'

He was truly a smart person. Grid smiled and took off the eyepatch. His red iris and his pupil, which resembled a black sun, were revealed. He blushed as the line reflexively emerged from his mouth, "I won't allow your comfort."

[The castration eye is activated.]

[Blocking all beneficial effects of the target!]

[There are too many targets in sight.]

[You have insufficient mana. The evil eye will apply to only a certain few people.]

"Evil eye!"

His colleagues finally became aware of Grid's new power and were shocked, while Lauel cheered. Lauel was even in tears.

"The evil eyes' king! He used the ability to transplant the evil eye?" Lauel questioned Grid as he held onto Grid's armor. He wanted to hear that he was right. His heart was desperate for it.

Fortunately, Grid nodded. "It's great that you noticed straight away. Yes, you are correct."

"Indeed...!"

Eyes...! He was finally getting his eyes! Lauel was thrilled at learning how to achieve his lifelong desires. He grasped both of Grid's hands and cried out, "I am living because of you! It is because of your presence that I can be who I am right now!"

"You're overdoing it," Grid said and put aside Lauel, who was shedding tears. Then he explained to his colleagues, "Do your best to build up 100% affinity with the evil eyes' king. Then you will be able to get an evil eye. The concept of the evil eye is..."

Grid didn't conceal anything. He taught his colleagues about the personality of the evil eyes' king, his experience of attacking the king's mind, the process of acquiring the evil eye, and the strengths and weaknesses of the evil eye. There was no distortion at all. Grid's jealousy only applied to other people or competitors. To his colleagues, Grid was just kind. He didn't mind even if his colleagues were more talented than him.

"Thank you!"

"Thank you, Grid!"

Lael listened carefully to Grid's explanation and embraced him while the others ran to Grid and expressed their affection and gratitude. On the other hand...

"Damian?"

"..."

Pope Damian just watched one with an awkward expression. Grid approached him, and Damian hurriedly waved both hands.

"I-I don't intend to intercept Grid's achievements."

"Intercept my achievements?"

"The method of how to get an evil eye. I'm not a member of the Overgeared Guild and can't benefit from Grid's knowledge."

"What are you saying? Why are you trying to be alone when you're our friend and colleague?"

"..."

"Damian, I wish for you to also get an evil eye. However, as mentioned earlier, the Ether Diamond is absolutely necessary to use the evil eye without limitations. Thus, let's go together when we raid the great demon's hand. When you're absent, the difference is as big as the difference between the heavens and the earth."

"Y-You're overpraising me."

"Let's go to the smithy. Didn't you receive production materials as rewards for this year's National Competition? I'll make a new item for you."

"..."

"Weapons or armor, which do you like? I heard that the sword you've been using these days is very special. Is your armor in a worse state than your weapon?"

"Yes... Yes, that's right. I think it is better not to replace my weapon."

Damian's left hand was covered with a bright light. It was a light that was like a flame. He held the light with one hand and pulled at it with the other hand. Then a dazzling white sword with a beautiful appearance was revealed. It was the grandeur of Holy Sword Summoning.

[Player Damian wishes to share the item information with you.]

[Damian's Holy Sword]

[Rating: Epic (Growth)]

Physical Attack Power: 1,450(+175) Magic Attack Power: 1,090(+81)

* Applies 10% of the wearer's strength to the weapon's physical damage.

* Applies 10% of the wearer's intelligence to the weapon's magic damage.

- * 30% reduction in cooldown time of divine attribute skills.
- * 40% reduction in the resource consumption of divine attribute skills.
- * 20% increase in the power of the wearer's swordsmanship skill.
- * 10% increase in attack speed.
- * 30% additional damage to evil beings.
- * There is a low probability of generating a random buff when attacking.
- ★ Can grow to the myth rating.
- ★ The growth rate is very slow.

A sword offered by the heavens to Damian, who has outstanding achievements and has been recognized by the goddess of light. It is a symbol, which is used to punish evil, that will grow with Damian.

Conditions of Use: Damian.

Weight: 0]

"Wow..." Grid was really impressed. With a weapon summoning skill, the holy sword made of light had infinite potential and contained a unique splendor. It was a weapon that even the legendary blacksmith Grid coveted. No, to be precise, Grid coveted it because it was a weapon. There was the option to add some of the wearer's stats to the weapon's performance. It was fantastic for Grid who had a huge amount of stats.

"It starts from the epic rating?"

"No, the rare rating. It just grew to the epic rating yesterday. That's why I haven't enhanced it yet."

"At the rare rating, the stats addition rate was less than 10%?"

"Yes, that's right. It was 8%."

"It will go up every time the rating increases... Unlike symbolic weapons like the First Holy Sword, these options are practical and it is a weapon that can be used for life."

"Really? I'm glad. Since this is Grid's evaluation, I can use it with confidence." Damian laughed.

It was the Overgeared King and not someone else who evaluated it as a 'lifelong weapon.' Thus, his affection for the sword grew bigger. Grid only felt sorry about one thing.

'It needs to be at least legendary great to be a lifelong weapon...'

Grid knew better than anyone else about the slow growth rate of growth type items. He couldn't imagine how slowly Damian's weapon would grow when it had the option of 'growth rate is very slow.' Grid shook his head and asked Damian, "I'm sorry, can you let me try wearing the sword once?"

Damian's Holy Sword was summoned using a skill. It was also a sword imbued with Damian's own magic power and divine power. Would Grid be able to use it? It was the perfect opportunity to experience with his characteristic of being able to 'wear all items.'

"Yes."

It was an item that couldn't be replaced by any treasures in the world. Despite this, Damian didn't raise any objections or questions about the ridiculous request to borrow it. The holy sword was immediately transferred to Grid.

[Damian's Holy Sword has been equipped.]

[It is a summoned item based on a skill. If the original owner recovers the skill, you will lose ownership of the item.]

"Ah..." Grid was astounded as he held the holy sword in his hand. He didn't think he would be able to equip this sword.

'Pagma was a huge monster.'

He didn't forget that the characteristics of Pagma's Descendant originated from Pagma. Grid's advantages and strengths were naturally from Pagma. As he returned the sword to Damian, Grid was able to keenly realize how great Pagma. He was feeling good because he could correctly identify the fraudulent nature of his class with Damian's help.

"Tell me the list of required armor. Let's go straight to the smithy."

"That... Is it okay? I thought you were busy hunting these days."

"Do you think I will hesitate to invest a few days in you? It's fine."

Just as Damian was always grateful to Grid, Grid also felt grateful toward Damian. He wasn't bothered at all about investing time in Damian.

'I'm also sorry about the evil eye.'

Damian had felt a huge shock and horror when his buffs were removed by the castration eye. Consequently, Grid wanted to comfort Damian after Damian was forced to give up on the duel because of him. The two people headed to the smithy.

"This and this." The gold medal rewards that Damian handed over to Grid were the Black Tortoise's Breath and White Tiger's Breath.

Defense was more important than attack power to Damian, so he chose the water and earth attributes.

'It is good.'

This was an opportunity to strengthen the Black Tortoise's Breath in advance. Grid smiled as he pulled out the insane dragon hammer and anvil.

"Aaaaack! No affinity! It doesn't rise!"

“A gift doesn’t work and a conversation doesn’t work. This is a real disaster.”

Raising affinity with the evil eyes’ king...! It was a new challenge for the Overgeared members, and it was very tough. Grid had the characteristic of ‘easily acknowledged’ and he had a high reputation, making it easy for him to communicate with named NPCs. However, in general, it wasn’t actually easy to associate with named NPCs.

Of course, the evil eyes’ king was kind to the Overgeared members, but it was tricky because of his chuuni nature and the deep wound in his heart. The number of people who increased their affinity with the king in the past fortnight was small enough to be counted on one hand.

“Kukukuk... He is a symbol of rebirth, but he isn’t an easy opponent...” Even Lael was unable to gain the affinity of the evil eyes’ king. He only gained one affinity point in the past fortnight. It was the level of a bud. Lael wanted to get the evil eye and be reborn as his ‘true me.’ As he returned from conversing with the evil eyes’ king, Lael sighed deeply.

Then the young knight called Royman came running in. “P-Prime Minister.”

Her real name was Karin. She was disguised as a man and still thought the fact that she was a woman had gone unnoticed. Royman had the title of ‘Rising Star of the West’ and had been reborn as a prospect of the Overgeared Kingdom after studying under Piaro for several years.

“What happened?” Lael was nervous. It was because Royman’s urgent attitude was unusual.

As expected, an amazing report was given, “I-It is a visit from the King of Valhalla.”

“God of War Ares?”

Why was he in a hurry to end the exchange with the Overgeared Kingdom? Lael immediately headed for the parlor. Ares, who was holding a cup in his hand, put it down and waved. “Hey, would you like to form an alliance?”

“Didn’t you already betray the Overgeared Kingdom and enter into a truce with the empire? Now you want an alliance with us?”

“Betrayed? What betrayal?”

“Didn’t you hand the White Dragon’s Eye to the empire?”

“I indirectly told you that I was handing the White Dragon’s Eye to the empire, allowing you to prepare in advance. Thus, you could resolve it well.”

“Is that how you are packaging it?”

“What packaging? It is the truth. If I really wanted to betray the Overgeared Kingdom, I wouldn’t have let you know the White Dragon’s Eye existed.”

“...It is an excellent speech. Did you learn this from your new strategist?”

“Yes.”

“...”

Ares' new strategist was much better than Lael had expected. The enlightened Lael saw a bright future.

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Many things happened in the next two months.

At the end of the truce agreement with the Saharan Empire, the Overgeared Kingdom quickly established an alliance with Valhalla. Without a truce agreement with the empire, Valhalla had gone on to invade their neighboring countries and expand their forces.

The empire felt its back burn. Valhalla and the Overgeared Kingdom... It was presumed they had a hostile relationship after the White Dragon's Eye incident. So how did they suddenly form an alliance? The empire had predicted that the Overgeared Kingdom would keep Valhalla in check while Valhalla would pressure the Overgeared Kingdom with them. Yet their predictions were completely overturned.

Consequently, the empire was forced to ignore Valhalla and concentrate on the Overgeared Kingdom. They relentlessly put pressure on the Overgeared Kingdom. Then the Overgeared Kingdom started tightening up their borders. The dozens of Overgeared members who received gold medal compensation in the 4th National Competition got new items thanks to Grid. They also exported a massive amount of equipment to Valhalla, strengthening their alliance and accumulating funds.

Meanwhile, Demon Slayer Yura returned from hell and contracted with a king elemental. She was the first one to gain this achievement and became the protagonist of a world message, becoming a topic comparable to Grid during the demon king's subjugation.

"I'm envious..."

The Overgeared members, who mostly contracted with lesser elementals, admired the dignity of the king elemental. They congratulated Yura sincerely, but they couldn't erase their envy. Yura also gained a big motivation.

'With this, I am a bit closer...'

She was also a little bit closer to the title of 'legend.' Yura was glad that she would be useful in the war against the empire which would occur in the future. Additionally...

"I will erase the goddess of light, who is painted in falsehoods, from the world!"

"Shut up! You evil people!"

The war between the Rebecca Church and the Yatan Church deepened. In order to increase their influence, the Yatan Church dispersed forces across the continent while the Rebecca Church earnestly resisted them. Yatan's Servants and Rebecca's Daughters gathered in one place and damaged several kingdoms.

Interestingly, the Overgeared Kingdom didn't suffer any damage. It could be considered as due to luck from the heavens since the Vatican was based in the Overgeared Kingdom, but of course, it wasn't luck. The Overgeared Kingdom wasn't affected by the war between the Rebecca Church and the Yatan Church purely because of Damian's efforts.

Damian even went a step further and asked the empire for support, "I believe that the empire can't ignore the Yatan Church and the fight for the peace of the continent."

"..."

The emperor had no justification to refuse sending support to the Rebecca Church and was tearfully forced to send his forces. Simultaneously, Kraugel was spotted in the empire. The place he was seen at after the 4th National Competition was the gravestone of Empress Aria.

It was an event that caused rampant speculation. People guessed that Kraugel had joined the empire. However, the truth was different.

"A great evil lives there."

Kirinus, the best spearsman on the continent, started to open his heart to Kraugel as he pointed to the imperial palace and revealed the tangled truth around Empress Aria's death. The imperial palace boasted a tremendous scale dozens of times larger than the Overgeared Kingdom. Among them, his finger pointed to the gorgeous palace where Empress Marie resided.

"This evil must be eliminated. If we don't get rid of her, there will be no future for this continent."

"..."

Kraugel couldn't help feeling in awe. Grid had mentioned a long time ago that one of his goals was to kill the empress.

'Grid, did you know the whole truth at the time?'

It seemed he had been fighting with a big burden on his shoulders for a long time.

『 The next breaking news. The Fold Kingdom has been undergoing a rapid development in recent years. 』

The Fold Kingdom was a tributary of the Overgeared Kingdom. 70% of the kingdom was mountainous and poor in soil quality. It was a weak country, but its state of mass poverty had improved and its agricultural and military facilities had expanded. This was the result of capital and manpower from the Overgeared Kingdom. The players of the Fold Kingdom benefited from the infrastructure that was gradually evolving and naturally felt affectionate toward the Overgeared Kingdom. People felt a genuine gratitude to the Overgeared Kingdom.

The royal family of the Fold Kingdom came forward to directly praise the Overgeared Kingdom.

"We have to try hard so that King Grid's mercy isn't in vain! Don't be lazy! Don't be satisfied! Our Fold Kingdom should be one of the pillars supporting the Overgeared Kingdom!"

"Wahhhh!"

The Fold Kingdom became a type of multi-base. It was a really strong force capable of moving and developing industrial facilities and manpower that the Overgeared Kingdom could no longer accommodate, as well as gather new resources based on this.

The strongest Saharan Empire armies—the armies led by the seven dukes—were dispatched to port cities. It was because the water clan started going crazy. The water clan invaded the port cities of the empire and dealt an enormous blow to the empire. Whenever the empire dispatched a suppression force, they would flee to the sea.

They were so hard to track that the empire was forced to place the army at every port city.

[Affinity with the evil eyes king has increased by 1.]

“Phew... It finally reached five points.”

“Congratulations. If you take it slowly, you will someday get 100 points.”

“Yes... I don’t know how many years but...”

The plans of the Overgeared members to build up affinity with the evil eyes king were greatly revised. They recognized it as a long-term project instead of a short-term project and abandoned their impatience. Only one person was different.

“Kukukuk, you have to deal with me today.”

Only Lauel didn’t give up and went to the evil eyes’ king every morning and evening. The evil eyes’ king didn’t seem to hate him very much. No, he seemed to have a liking toward the human race itself. It was a change that had occurred from him watching the Overgeared members for the past two months. Compared to the days when he was isolated and alone... the evil eyes’ king felt that interactions with humans were very pleasant and informative.

The heart of the king influenced all of the evil eyes. The evil eyes got more aggressive in their training, and the Destiny Guardians became more organized.

Meanwhile, the number of invaders aiming at the vampire cities was increasing. They were dungeons that the Overgeared Kingdom had been using for many years. The players believed they could make a breakthrough as long as they used the dungeons and headed for Reidan’s desert.

Some of them were able to penetrate through the tight guard of the Overgeared members and enter the vampire city. However, the problem was that it was always the ‘seventh’ city. The invaders experienced the worst hell instead of the best hunting ground.

[The vampire earl ‘Noll’ has appeared!]

“What trivial bastards dare enter?”

“Hiik!”

“S-Spare us...!”

The power of the noble class vampires was more than rumored. The boy vampire wore armor that neutralized most of the invaders’ attack power, and the invaders were helpless as they were killed. Noll

grew rapidly from their sacrifices. It was just as the Overgeared Guild intended. The reason why the elite Overgeared troops guarding the entrances of the vampire cities created a gap in the boundary of the seventh city was to raise Noll.

“Lord Chris of Reidan! Today, I will gain your head!”

There was a constant regional conflict in the desert of Reidan, the border between the Overgeared Kingdom and the empire. In the early days, the Black Knights’ cavalry committed a one-sided invasion of Reidan’s territory, only to suffer greater damage as time passed. It was because the Reidan soldiers had been fully adapted to the desert terrain while the empire troops had found it strange. Whenever the two armies clashed, the imperial army often suffered one-sided damage. It was painful since the empire had to occupy Reidan to invade the Overgeared Kingdom.

“You want to get my head with this type of skill?”

Moreover, as the Lord of Reidan and duke of the Overgeared Kingdom, Chris’ power was too great. The black knights couldn’t go up against Chris and the previous Giant Guild members who swept through the battlefield.

“Y-You are just the duke of a small kingdom...!” The Black Knights’ anger and hatred reached the peak after losing hundreds of colleagues. They rushed toward Chris whenever he appeared on the battlefield. From Chris’ point of view, they were good nutrients.

“Overgeared King Grid threatens humanity by colluding with different species. This can be called a disaster. I will put down the disaster for the sake of peace on the continent.”

It was a relationship stemming from the emperor’s declaration two months ago. The official relationship between the Overgeared Kingdom and the Saharan Empire was now that of ‘enemies.’ The armed conflict between the two nations started to be recorded as formal wars, not temporary happenings. The ‘war system’ was activated, increasing the players’ experience gain rate.

That’s right. The Overgeared members could now grow through war. Every time they killed an enemy, they gained a high amount of experience, just like catching a monster. Of course, it was an enjoyable system. If it wasn’t for the war system, the Overgeared members would have suffered from the war. The S.A Group had a good grasp of the position of the players.

“Chriiiiiis!” The deputy chief of the Black Knights, who lost an arm to Chris in the preceding war, roared and rushed forward. He was level 385. The Black Knights were a subordinate organization of the Red Knights, but their leaders were comparable to the Red Knights. However, this wasn’t enough to threaten Chris. After all, he was first on the unified rankings. In order to suppress Chris’ talents, effort, and experience, an enemy that was at least the fourth advancement should come out.

[The commander ‘Chris’ has cut off the head of the enemy!]

[The morale of the allies has risen!]

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

Reidan...

In the city that bordered the empire, the elite troops of the Overgeared Kingdom were growing every day.

『 There are many cars in the world. However, the only car that satisfies me is from Daejin Motors. 』

The Daejin car advertisements that used Shin Youngwoo—Grid—as a model started to dominate all media platforms. The Daejin Group had considered Grid’s busy schedule and produced a CF starring him only three months after the end of the National Competition.

“Youngwoo-ssi has an aura that is different from ordinary models and actors. I mean... it is like the dignity of the royalty of European countries? Haha.”

“That’s not true. Your praise is too much.”

“No, it’s not. This isn’t an exaggeration but pure sincerity...”

The advertisement which was completed with an exceptionally high perfection rate would be sent to a total of 198 countries. In a coffee shop in the lobby of Daejin Motors’ headquarters, Youngwoo drank hot chocolate as he watched the advertisement, which was being played continuously on the screen.

“Ah, the development of the new car is expected to be completed soon. The items were chosen well. You can look forward to it.”

Thanks to Shin Youngwoo’s ridiculous press conference, the president of Daejin Motors had to develop a new car unexpectedly. The identity of the man sitting next to Youngwoo was the president of Daejin Motors. He had originally planned to meet Youngwoo in his office, but he suddenly wanted to boast to his employees that he was in a coffee store with Grid.

The effect was big. Numerous employees who were in the lobby stopped and stared at the coffee store.

“Wow, I never thought the day would come when I would see God Grid sitting in our lobby.”

“It is a real jackpot. Didn’t he use any correction effects when making his character in Satisfy? The ratio is almost model level.”

“Putting aside proportions and looks, there is a different force about him. He is unlike a normal person.”

“That’s right. Our boss gives off an extraordinary impression, but he is like Extra Number One in front of Grid.”

“Ah, was that our boss?”

“...I only recognized him now.”

The words of the employees in the lobby entered the ears of the president of Daejin Motors. He heard the words ‘extra’, ‘squid’, and ‘folding screen’, but he didn’t care. The president was proud that he was recognized while sitting next to Youngwoo who wielded the highest influence.

‘I should go home early today to boast to my son and grandchild.’

The president was excited and spoke to Youngwoo, “So I was saying... It is the God General Sys.”

“God General Sys?” Youngwoo didn’t understand for a moment. The name of the new fake car that he had thought up of roughly at the press conference wasn’t important enough to remain in Youngwoo’s memories. Youngwoo belatedly pulled out the memory and nodded. “Ah, yes. The new car that I’m looking forward to so much that I can’t sleep at night? I didn’t understand for a moment because I didn’t know you would use the name of God General Sys.”

“Haha, it is the name that Youngwoo yourself gave, so we have to use it. That’s why we’ve decided to produce only one for Youngwoo.”

“That’s right.”

“By the way, what if we made six cars?”

“Six?”

“Yes, two for Youngwoo-ssi’s parents, one for Youngwoo-ssi’s sister, one for Youngwoo, one for Yura, and one for the chairman.”

“Why bother...”

It was an opportunity to get free cars for all his family members. Although it seemed remarkable listening to it the first time, it wasn’t actually free. A tax would be incurred. The cost of production was close to 800 million won, and if he received four cars, the taxes he would have to pay was horrible to imagine. He would rather pay tax for a better-branded car for his parents and give his old car to Sehee.

The president witnessed Youngwoo’s confused expression and misunderstood his thoughts.

“Ah... It isn’t intended to show off the relationship between the two families... This... It is just a pure commemoration...”

‘Ah...’ Youngwoo belatedly noticed the chairman’s intentions. It was to give Grid and his granddaughter a couple car. Additionally, Grid’s family and the chairman would ride the same car. The car proved they had a special relationship. In other words, the chairman wanted to show off.

“Hrmm.”

Well, wouldn’t it be good to let this type of thing emerge? However, it was a story of when he would meet this request. Youngwoo let the president be nervous for a long time before finally opening his mouth.

[Chapter 994](#)

“I understand the chairman’s will. Instead, I have a requirement.”

“What is it?”

This was a chance for him to show off a connection with a chaebol family. It might be a precious opportunity for someone else, but there were no merits for Youngwoo. The condition he gave was completely unexpected.

“I heard that big companies and famous people are fostering rankers at a business or family level. Is it the same for Daejin?”

The word ranker naturally meant a Satisfy ranker. The president of Daejin Motors looked around uneasily before responding in a low voice, "Of course, we have also made some developments."

Chairman Lee Jinmyung didn't appreciate his granddaughter's enthusiasm for Satisfy, but it was because he had always regarded Yura as his successor. Lee Jinmyung recognized the importance of Satisfy according to the trend of the times and secretly sponsored and fostered rankers at the corporate level. Once they were fully grown and participating in big events, Daejin's reputation would rise naturally. Well, now, Yura's name was sufficient.

"Have Daejin step up and encourage the rankers of the Korean companies and family members to join the Overgeared Guild."

"..." The president of Daejin Motors made a distorted expression. The thought of Youngwoo eating up all the power that the companies had invested in was absurd and somewhat unpleasant. He felt that he was being treated as a pushover.

Youngwoo shook his hand. "I don't mean to have them permanently join the Overgeared Guild. That isn't possible. I just want to receive support from them in the form of temporary mercenaries. It will be good for both sides. We will provide at least unique-grade items made by the best blacksmiths of the Overgeared Kingdom as well as top-quality hunting grounds."

"I guess it is the hunting grounds on the border of Reidan which are much talked about these days."

"Yes, your level will rise quickly if you hunt imperial soldiers."

The war of attrition with the empire was gnawing at the power of the Overgeared Kingdom. Since the empire had an army that was hundreds of times larger than the Overgeared Kingdom's, the constant loss of soldiers would only damage the Overgeared Kingdom.

"Is your ultimate goal to fill the Overgeared army with players instead of NPCs?"

The president of Daejin Motors had little experience playing Satisfy. However, he was the president of a large company and was able to easily grasp the situation. Youngwoo nodded while secretly admiring the president. "You saw it correctly."

"Umm... Yes, I understand. I'll tell the chairman. Even so, I don't know if the other companies will move easily. Obviously, they will demand a lot."

"I will coordinate it well. All you have to do is pass on my message to them."

Youngwoo anticipated what the companies wanted. It was for Grid or the Overgeared members to be models for their companies, to receive items produced from the Overgeared Kingdom, or have corporate publicity signage in the Overgeared Kingdom. Youngwoo was willing to accept them all.

'In any case, I need a lot of money.'

He could sleep less. If he divided his time well, he could promote the companies. There were many blacksmiths, so he could produce as many items as they wanted.

'I will draw on the resources and assets of the companies while the companies will borrow my knowledge and skills.'

The deal was likely to be fully realized. The companies' evaluation of the Overgeared Kingdom was very high. However, tying himself up to a large number of companies from the outset would cut his value, so he only used domestic companies.

'A funny picture will come out.'

The rankers were easy to control because they belonged to a company or a family. He would gather hundreds of thousands of them in Reidan to consume the imperial troops. Of course, this was Lauel's big picture.

In Satisfy, darkness was the symbol of evil, and evil was the great demons. This formula was applied to the elementals. It was a natural outcome for the light elemental king to favor Yura, who had hunted the most number of demons among the players.

[Light Elemental King Contractor]

[You can use the highest ranked light elemental.

Current level of the highest-grade light elemental: 1

-Available Elemental Techniques-

* The energy of the elemental king is infinite. The use of the elemental doesn't consume the resources of the contractor.]

[Sword of Light]

[Makes the elemental into a sword of light.

The Sword of Light follows the contractor...]

[Flash]

[The light elemental will 'instantaneously' move to the target pointed out by the contractor.

If the target is strong, it will shine intensely...]

[Elemental King Summoning Lv. 1]

[Summons an elemental king to the present age through the light elemental.

The ability of the light elemental king is affected by the ability of the contractor.

The low skill level limits the abilities of the light elemental king.

Summoning Duration Time: 10 minutes.

Cooldown Time: 30 hours.]

"..."

Yura hadn't been expecting much after she was forced to postpone her visit to the World Tree due to hunting in hell. Most of her colleagues had contracted with lower to intermediate elementals, and she thought she would be the same. Yet it ended up being an elemental king.

She once again owed a great debt to Grid. Her current self wouldn't exist if she hadn't met him in the temple in the past. She would still be one of Yatan's Servants, struggling against the Rebecca Church and Overgeared Kingdom. Yura would have regretted it every day.

"I'll become someone you can count on."

Step.

Today, Yura didn't open the gate to hell. The place she came to was the city of Reidan surrounded by the desert.

"Yura?"

On the walls, the faces of the Overgeared members—who were tired from the inexhaustible imperial army—brightened. Yura had been focused on hell hunting since the beginning of the 4th National Competition until the present. Consequently, they hadn't expected her to join the war so soon. The gold medalist in Drawing the Saint Sword and silver medalist in PvP—she was a strong representative of the Overgeared Guild. She was a power that could do the work of ~4–5 of the top Overgeared members alone. The Overgeared members were reassured that she would be with them in the future.

After a while...

"Hell Leap."

The Overgeared members witnessed Yura's development and realized how much they had underestimated her. She jumped into space itself and moved to hell, leaving the gate that connected hell to the present world. Demons popped out of the gate and into the middle of the battlefield.

"Eh?"

There was the sudden appearance of the red dimensional door and the demons pouring from it. The imperial soldiers were stunned by the unrealistic sight and forgot to even scream as they became food for the demons.

"You can summon demons?" Chris asked with a surprised expression. A demon hunter could summon demons...? It was a bizarre contradiction.

Yura shook her head. "I simply opened a passage."

Hell Leap—it was a skill that temporarily transferred her body to hell. The user didn't know where they would appear in hell, and the temporary transmission only lasted for one second. Yura took one second to identify the place she appeared, recognized the presence of a sufficient number of demons in the vicinity and opened the gate while escaping from hell. She applied the escape technique as a summoning technique. For the imperial soldiers, it was literally a hell gate.

"Aaaack!"

“Hiik! S-Spare me...!”

The duration of the gate was one minute. It was plenty of time. Demons with the instinct of eating humans utilized the gate actively. They flew forward with full power.

“W-Wow...”

Thousands of demons popped out and massacred the imperial soldiers, causing the Overgeared members to feel overwhelmed. They worried that they would be next after the imperial army was destroyed. However, they had Yura. As the imperial soldiers were chewed up, the demons who turned their attention to the Overgeared members in a hungry manner were pierced by Yura’s bullets.

“There haven’t been too many prey these days.”

“The Vatican is closed, so it is natural to have no guests.”

At a mountain village near the Vatican, there was a unique village with large and small Rebecca statues in many places. Originally it was filled with tourists wanting to visit the Vatican, but it had been dusty of late. The Vatican was temporarily closed as the war between the Rebecca Church and Yatan Church intensified. As such, the Vatican wasn’t accepting outsiders, so no tourists were visiting the village.

“Hrmm.”

Thanks to this, Shay was bored. The assassins—Shay, Kerb, and Sniffer—were a vicious PK group that worked with Dong Pao—a Rebecca priest—in luring tourists to certain areas and stealing their money. However, they were also the benefactors who informed Grid about Marie Rose’s presence and gave him Kasim. Of course, they hadn’t meant to be benefactors.

“I want to release some stress, but it isn’t working.”

“I should pick up an assassination request today.”

“I have done more than 100 commissions this month. I don’t like it anymore. It is annoying. I need some healing.”

“Eh? Hey.”

The trio sitting on the terrace of the restaurant turned their gaze toward the person at the entrance of the village. Just by looking, it was obvious that the person had a lot of money. It was a man wearing unusual sunglasses. They didn’t see his face and ID because he was wearing a helmet. but based on the overall armed status, his level was in the low 200s.

“Doesn’t he look like a character made by a man with some money?”

“Yes. All the level 200 items are enhanced.”

“He might be a gold spoon.”

The items scattered a subtle glow. This was proper prey. Shay's group exchanged sly smiles with each other and got up. The three people came down from the terrace and were engaged in daily conversation as they passed by the unidentified man. Yes, they passed by the prey they had been waiting for.

'X! Leave quickly!'

The trio hastened their pace. They had an iron rule. This cardinal rule was that they didn't mix with a person who hid their face and ID. Why? In the past, they had a bad experience with Grid who concealed his identity. They didn't want to go through that terrible experience twice. Since then, Shay's group excluded unknown targets from their PK list. It was a type of phobia.

"Oh, it would be good if we could hunt pushovers like in the old days."

"It was almost a windfall to meet those kids. Still, what can we do when it is a one in a million case?"

They couldn't be discouraged. The reason why Shay's party could PK in one area for a long time was because they were cautious. In particular, the most important thing was their affinity with the villagers. The villagers didn't doubt Shay's party, who were friendly and kind, and never thought they were bandits. Sometimes, paladins from the Rebecca Church would come down to the village and ask about the bandits, but they never cared about Shay's party. This was the importance of image management.

"It is impossible today. Perhaps we should go to the guild and ask...?"

The trio left the village only to freeze like a stone statue. They noticed that the unidentified man was following closely behind them. The man took off the helmet and black hair flowed down. The revealed name was...

"G-Grid!"

Shay's party was full of hatred. They even wanted to kill Grid.

"This is great. Have you been doing this in the same place for many years?"

"T-That, sometimes... Sometimes just..."

"T-That's right! These days, we mostly work in other places. We sometimes come here for healing!"

"I-It is like a heart that misses home... Hahaha..."

Shay was a single digit ranker on the assassin's ranking. During recent times, he had fallen to the top 20, but he still had excellent skills. In particular, he had a lot of experience with PK and excelled in PK skills. Even so, he was modest in front of Grid. He had been beaten by Grid several times and was afraid of him. Grid suggested to them, "Go to Reidan. In that place, you can cheat, kill, and steal from the empire's players. Won't it be more fun to play on a bigger stage than in a village like this?"

"...You want to use us as a tool of war?"

"D-Do you think we will cooperate with you?"

"Yes, if you don't want to die. You will be killed by me and then have a kill order placed on you."

"...Shall we leave right now?"

“Assassination is our specialty. Isn’t that why you came to us? We’ll definitely be a great help to you.”

“Yes, I’m looking forward to it. You will be rewarded if you play an active role.”

Grid had to mobilize as many contacts as possible in order to deal with the empire. Thus, Grid was wandering in search of connections, but they were mostly evil ones. He was fortunate that he was stronger than those he had a bad relationship with.

“Next is Bubat... Hmm...”

After confirming the appearance of Shay’s party, Grid was ready to use the return scroll, only to stop. Now that he was here, he became curious about ‘that’ place. Grid failed to recall the old location and had to ask Shay, “That dungeon, where was it?”

“Dungeon? Ah, the one with the vampire duke sealed? It is a forbidden area, so it isn’t stored on the map.”

It was a space where magic and skills were blocked because of a powerful evil influence. That was the space where Shay’s party used to hunt the players.

“It is approximately three kilometers northeast of here... Hey, forget it. Just follow me.”

It was complicated to explain in words. Instead, Shay just moved forward, and Grid followed behind him. Shay was making a smug smile. He was timid, but he wanted payback.

‘No matter how great Grid is, he can’t catch up with my speed when I’m a master of swiftness.’

Grid would try to chase Shay and be humiliated. Shay imagined Grid’s expression and hummed. Then he used a skill that increased his movement speed to the peak. However...

“...”

Grid maintained the appropriate distance behind Shay without much difficulty. He was very agile and had recently created a set of items that sped up his movements. Shay started crying. ‘Filthy bastard. Really filthy bastard. Eating everything alone.’

He would quickly finish this side of the world and cut off all connections with Grid forever. He would leave for the other side of the continent, so he wouldn’t get involved with Grid again.

‘No, let’s go to the East Continent,’ Shay vowed repeatedly.

[Chapter 995](#)

People weren’t seriously concerned about the war situation in the Overgeared Kingdom. Was the empire’s army hundreds of times larger than the Overgeared Kingdom?

“What does that mean?”

Grid would come forward and slaughter the enemies as always. People took it for granted, and the experts didn’t disagree. It was because Grid and the Overgeared members had shown too much. They always handled crises in ways and methods that transcended common sense.

Then what was the truth? The situation of the Overgeared Kingdom was like a candle flickering in the wind. The armies of the seven dukes were tied down for a while as they defended the port cities, but there were still the magicians of the Tower of Eternity, the magic machines, the Red Knights, the Five Pillars, and so on. The empire hadn't pulled out their real power yet. On the other hand, the Overgeared Kingdom had already put a lot of effort into stopping the empire's troops.

Grid was nervous. He was anxious because bad results kept coming up. The reason why Grid used methods, such as dealing with the companies and using his network of connections, was in effort to change the expected outcome. He came here was the same reason.

[Marie Rose's evil influence makes your magic power turbid. All types of spells and skills aren't available.]

[You have resisted.]

It was an ominous entrance that looked like the mouth of a monster. This was the cave Marie Rose was trapped in. The vampire duke sealed by the second pope Chreshler and Rebecca's Daughters—the ultimate vampire who transcended Shizo Beriache—was released from the seal by none other than Grid.

'It happened because of Malacus' Cloak.'

An unintentional accident had occurred. Grid was looking forward to the effect of the Blood King Candidate.

[Blood King Candidate]

[You have become a candidate to be a blood king.]

You will give a sense of pressure to ordinary vampires. All ordinary vampires hostile toward you will have their stats decreased by 15%.

You will give a sense of confusion to true blood vampires. All true blood vampires hostile toward you will have their stats decreased by 8%.

Direct descendant vampires will be interested in you. Any direct descendant vampires facing you will temporally awaken from the Curse of Idleness.]

Grid had sealed four direct descendants, so the title Qualification of a Blood King was promoted to Blood King Candidate. The alertness of the direct descendants rose, and this was enough to awaken them from the Curse of Idleness. This might work positively for Marie Rose.

'I am happy to play.'

Noll said that when he faced Blood King Candidate Grid, the thought that 'everything was annoying' had been erased from his head and he had been filled with motivation. He'd felt 'emotions' for the first time since he was born, and he had been filled with a fearsome anger and killing intent toward Grid.

Noll had described the event of the day like this, "I realized I was alive after feeling the emotion. Once the Curse of Idleness was broken, I felt sorry for the wasted time and even grateful to you for making me angry and forgetting the curse."

This was why Grid looked forward to the effect of Blood King Candidate.

'If Marie Rose is like Noll...'

Would she be thankful to him for freeing her from the seal and the Curse of Idleness? What emotions would she feel, and if she felt favorable toward him, would she take a cooperative attitude? Of course, it was an extremely optimistic idea. He could provoke Marie Rose and be slain by her.

However, the circumstances weren't clear, so Grid planned to grasp a straw and contact her. Marie Rose was one of the most powerful beings in the world. The benefits that came from having her as a companion were so huge that it couldn't compare with the value of Grid's life.

'It is a gamble I should challenge once.'

Grid came here to increase his chances of the gamble. He sent Shay back and entered the cave alone. Then he pulled out a pickaxe and held it.

'Braham said it previously. Marie Rose's evil influence was inherited from Shizo Beriache, and she has a very strong personality.'

He knew because he actually experienced it. It had been ~15–17 years since Marie Rose left here, but there were still remnants of her evil energy. Grid made a hypothesis, 'The cave that sealed Marie Rose for hundreds of years will have a thick evil influence...'

It was a natural formula that caves had minerals. That's right. Grid thought it was likely that the minerals present in the cave were affected by Marie Rose's evil influence. He wasn't expecting much from the performance of the minerals.

'The minerals affected by Marie Rose's evil influence will have a low rating. I only hope that they aren't corroded by the evil influence.'

The land near the cave was barren. Thus, the minerals which were directly exposed to Marie Rose's evil influence might've become dusty and corroded. Nevertheless, the reason why Grid needed the minerals was to buy Marie Rose's favor when they met someday.

'She's very sensitive to the smell of blood from Malacus' Cloak.'

It was enough to wake her up from the seal after hundreds of years!

'If I am wearing items that contain her evil influence, she will recognize them immediately.'

He couldn't help being impressed with his way of thinking. His thoughts were occasionally extraordinary. Then Grid started looking closely at the cave. It was to observe the presence of minerals. However, there were only stones at the entrance, and he had to go deeper.

[Marie Rose's evil influence makes your magic power turbid. All types of spells and skills aren't available.]

[You have resisted.]

[The remnants of the evil influence is eating at your physical and mental strength. You have fallen into the 'weak' and 'confused' state.]

[You have resisted.]

The deeper he went, the thicker the concentration of evil influence and the higher the physical burden became. Grid was able to resist them, but it would've been different for Shay's party.

'They can't even enter here.'

Marie Rose's seal wasn't defiled. Once he learned that, Grid's mind felt more comfortable. He was once again impressed by the fraudulent nature of a 'legend' and felt thankful as he arrived at the innermost part of the cave.

'It is surprisingly big.'

He hasn't known it from the outside, but it was a huge cave. It took 40 minutes to reach this place despite there being only one road.

'She has been sleeping here for hundreds of years.'

Grid looked at the coffin in the middle of the space. It was a pure white coffin. The beautiful figure of Marie Rose sleeping there naturally came to his mind.

"Ah..."

He had imagined it, but her real beauty was enough to make him feel in awe. It was mysterious. Grid emerged from his thoughts and carefully observed the wall of this space. It was in order to find minerals, but most of them were already corroded by the evil influence. This space was quite big, and it took time to search.

'Ah, the efficiency is too bad.'

If it wasn't for the residual evil influence, he would've called Minor over right away. The minerals detector hadn't found new minerals in a long time, and he was inactive these days.

'Still, he isn't playing around...'

For a few years already, Minor had been forced to work in the library without a break. He read books related to minerals and geography and expanded his knowledge. Grid raised the building level of the library purple for Minor's sake. Increasing the level of the library widened the variety of books it handled.

'Minor's mineral detection capability is evolving steadily.'

In order for Minor to be more active, the territory of the Overgeared Kingdom had to expand. The larger the scope of Minor's activities, the greater the likelihood was of finding new minerals. Thus, he couldn't lose more in the war.

'I absolutely can't lose any land. Absolutely not.'

The Overgeared Kingdom had been built by Grid and his colleagues. It contained all of their hard work and enthusiasm. Yet it was going to be taken away by others now? Grid couldn't accept it. He had no thoughts of letting it being taken away. Thus, he planned to depend on Marie Rose.

“Ah...!”

Grid searched for a while and finally found his goal. There were some minerals in the corner of the space which was so darkened by the evil influence that it was blacker than darkness.

“This is it!”

Ttang!Ttang!Ttang!

Grid started mining. His skill handling the pickaxe wasn't rusty and was still amazing. Any miner who saw it would cry. By the way...

[The mining has failed.]

[The mining has failed.]

[The mining...]

[The continuous mining failure has increased the possibility of damage to the stones.]

“...?”

It was a mineral that endured Marie Rose's evil influence. This was the first time Grid had seen such a stubborn mineral. The stones—which were embedded deep into the ground—weren't easy to mine, even with Grid's skills.

‘Ah, what to do?’

Failing to mine a mineral one or two more times could damage the mineral and reduce its value. Grid pondered for a moment if he should bring Minor inside, even if it was dangerous. Then he shook his head.

‘I need the residue of the evil influence, not the mineral itself.’

In the first place, he didn't have any expectations for the performance of a weakened mineral. As mentioned earlier, the mineral itself might be useless. It wouldn't be a problem if he kept failing in the mining and damaged it. Grid gave up on his idea and started mining again. Surprisingly, the mining succeeded without failing once.

[You have succeeded in the mining.]

[The Unidentified Iron Ore has been acquired.]

“Legendary Blacksmith's Appraisal.”

[The information about the target item has been updated.]

Ttiring~

[Iron Ore with Evil Energy]

[An iron ore that has been saturated with evil energy for many years.

Care is required when handling it.

There is a possibility of dying when touching it by hand.

Weight: 5]

[This item has a hidden function!]

[Iron Ore with the Power of Transcendence]

[An iron ore imbued with the power of an existence that isn't subject to death.

Anyone who can cope with the evil influence of the iron ore can obtain the hidden strength behind it.

* There is an option to add stats when using it as an item making material.

However, there is a high possibility that all types of restrictions will arise due to the evil influence.

Weight: 5]

"Huh..."

From an ordinary person's standpoint, it didn't look very good because of the evil influence.

"...Hahahat."

Was there any more? Grid's eyes that were blank for a while lit up. He started to search the entire cave again. The coffin which had been watching Grid closely asked, -Did you wake up Marie Rose?

"...?" Feeling stunned, Grid was lost for words.

The coffin introduced itself, -I am 2nd Pope Chreshler.

"...?"

Was this also Pagma's work?

'Is he crazy?'

No, he wasn't. Pagma had locked the soul of 5th Pope Franz into the sword despite Franz being his friend. As far as Grid knew, there was no contact between Pagma and the second pope.

'...Thus, he could do it without any burden.'

Grid's expression was awkward as the coffin inquired again, -You woke up Marie Rose, right? Why did you wake up the person sleeping inside me?

"No, it wasn't me. It was empty when I came here," Grid denied it. He didn't know what would happen if he revealed the truth. Grid overlooked one fact. The first pope and second pope—those who made the Rebecca Church transcended the category of ordinary humans. Grid couldn't deceive the ego of a transcendent.

-You are lying to me right now.

The coffin flew and hit Grid.

"Eek...?"

Was he being beaten up by a coffin? Grid had suffered through a lot in his life, and he thought this was absurd and unfair. Then the coffin scoffed contemptuously at him, -Did you learn to lie from Pagma while inheriting his skills?

“...!?”

[Chapter 996](#)

The seven malignant saints had betrayed the gods and deceived the people. Faith had declined, and great demons had appeared on the ground. That was the age of grief. The people who suffered from war and hunger resented the gods while a poor saint went on the path of penance—this was the birth story of the Rebecca Church.

The saint speaking here was the first pope. The holy sword of light had been given to the saint who completed the path of penance. The saint had defeated the great demons with the power of the holy sword and sang the goddess’ praises. Righteous heroes had been drawn to the song. They had built temples and statues for the goddess.

The saint had been crowned by the heroes and had become pope. The pope was above the heroes. This was the final chapter of the story. As could be seen from the overall picture, the first pope had been a very special person. He had destroyed the great demons and built up faith. He was the great person who had saved all of humanity. It was highly-rated compared to other legends.

The Rebecca members revered him as a god-class being. Would such a great person select just anyone as his successor? Absolutely not. The first pope had searched for someone more talented than himself to be his successor, and this was Chreshler. Hundreds of years later, he became a person who couldn’t leave a coffin but it wasn’t good to look down on him.

“It’s a lie? But I really wasn’t lying.” Grid tried to resolve Chreshler’s misunderstanding. “Your Holiness’ coffin was already empty when I arrived here. Marie Rose was already gone. Really.”

-You are a really bad guy.

“Huh?”

-My ego was sealed in the coffin made of sacred wood and is designed to wake up when an intruder enters. This is the second time I woke up.

“...?”

-The first time I woke up, Marie Rose was still sleeping in me. Now she isn’t.

“...So?”

-So?

So? He didn’t understand...? The pretend innocence of Pagma’s successor was abominable. If he didn’t let Marie Rose go, who did it? The coffin jumped on its own. It was an absurd sight! Grid tried to avoid the attack of the coffin but failed. The coffin was as fast as Faker using Lantier’s technique.

[You have suffered 33,780 damage!]

“Keok! C-Crazy!”

What the hell was going on? The unpleasant beating hurt too much. Grid would die with one or two more hits. Chreshler’s voice entered the ears of the bewildered Grid, -You’re still alive?! didn’t know I had become so weak. Is there a limit even though I took over the sacred wood?

“I-I don’t understand what you’re saying, but it is a misunderstanding.

-Misunderstanding? Misunderstanding~?

‘I-Is this a human (?)?’

Grid sensed it. Chreshler had once been considered as the strongest pope ever, and he had been a great man who left his name in history. A conversation wasn’t going to work with him.

‘Let’s run away.’

Grid judged that he really could die here. He wanted Chreshler’s information about Pagma and the minerals, but he decided to give up. He didn’t want to die because of a coffin!

“Quick Movements! Blackening!” Grid used his skills to escape from this place.

-...Hmm, what? It does seem to be a misunderstanding. Chreshler calmed his agitation and stepped back.

Grid wished Chreshler’s attitude had changed one second faster. “...?!”

It was a higher power and instinct that transcended skills and the concept of magic. The existence of Chreshler denied any evil energy. Grid’s Blackening was lifted, and the haze of demonic energy melted away like snow under the sun.

[Blackening has been forcibly released!]

[The supreme divine power is denying your demonic energy!]

[There is a severe recoil in your body!]

[You have suffered 2,265,320 damage!]

[A legend doesn’t die easily. Your health is fixed to a minimum...]

“Cough! Cough, cough!”

What was this? Grid was astonished by the strong impact. Blood poured out from a hole in his body, and he trembled. Chreshler was stunned.

-You emitted demonic energy in front of me? Were you going to commit suicide? I’m surprised.

“Pant... Pant...”

What skill was this? Chreshler came up to Grid who was coughing up blood. He was appalled by the sight of the empty coffin floating in the air.

-Well, you survived. This is why a legend is good. In any case, a cockroach is a cockroach.

“Kuooock... What did you just do?”

-I didn't do anything. My presence as a pope detected and extinguished your evil energy.

"..."

-There is no need to look at me like I'm a monster. The pope's presence doesn't work on Marie Rose. Uh, I have to catch her and seal her...

"..."

-I guess the lifespan of the sacred wood was shorter than I thought. I think you didn't release Marie Rose from the seal. It is that the divine power of the coffin weakened and Marie Rose woke up herself from the seal.

It was true. Grid might've stimulated Marie Rose, but he wasn't the one to release Marie Rose's seal. She woke up by herself and left this place by herself. Grid just gave her the smell of blood.

'...In the end, I am a contributor.'

He wasn't stupid enough to explain it though. Grid took a potion and asked Chreshler, "Were you killed when you sealed Marie Rose?"

-No? I sealed Marie Rose and lived well for decades, dying after a long time. I lived until I was 110.

"Then how did you seal Marie Rose before you became the coffin?"

-I naturally sealed her with my holy power. However, the third pope was short-lived, and the fourth and fifth generations were so weak that they couldn't bear Marie Rose's evil influence. I felt that Marie Rose was going to awaken, so I was forced to die and become a coffin. I placed my ego into the coffin made of sacred wood.

"Was it Pagma who helped you at the time?"

-Yes. That jerk... He cheated me.

"...?"

-He told me that my senses would remain, so I could feel Marie Rose in me forever even when I'm asleep. It was fucking bullshit.

"...?"

-I lose all my senses when I fall asleep. Thus, I never felt her. Sigh. I was looking forward to waking up and feeling her again...

"..."

It felt like Grid was having a conversation that was out of focus. Grid woke himself up by hitting his cheeks and corrected the direction of the conversation.

"Can you tell me about Pagma? Additionally, the first intruder..."

-What are you going to do if I tell you? Are you going to bring Marie Rose back?

"..."

He wanted Grid to catch Marie Rose? Grid thought it was ridiculous, and Chreshler laughed.

-You have a cute part, unlike Pagma. Your reaction is straightforward and not bad. Okay. I'll answer your question. It seems you have been a great help to us since you have received the blessing of the goddess of light and the three churches.

The second pope instantly discerned the goddess' blessing and the blessings of the Rebecca, Judar, and Dominion Churches.

'Indeed, people should live a good life.'

There was nothing wrong with the saying 'you reap what you sow.' Chreshler spoke to the expectant Grid, -Lie down in me.

"...In your coffin?"

-Isn't it better to see it once than listen a hundred times? I'm going to show you my old memories.

Still, wasn't lying down in a coffin too much? Grid faced the wide open coffin and was forced to hesitate. As a living person, lying down in a place where the dead stayed was uncomfortable. However, this only lasted for a moment. Grid nodded and lay down in the coffin. Then...

[The Sacred Wood Coffin has accepted you.]

[The divine power has permeated you in a very small amount.]

[The advanced light elemental has responded pleasantly.]

[The light of the advanced light elemental has become a bit brighter.]

[Dark resistance has permanently increased by 5%.]

[In the future, there is a very low chance of adding 5% holy attribute damage to basic attacks.]

[Affinity with Chreshler has increased by three.]

"...!"

He received an unexpected benefit! Grid was delighted as his vision turned dark. When he opened his eyes again, he saw a long-haired man standing in front of him. It was a beautiful man who looked like a painting of the Hwarang from the Silla Dynasty hanging in an art gallery. (TL: Flower youths, an elite warrior group of Silla known for their beauty.)

'Pagma!' Grid cried out unknowingly, but vocalization was not possible.

[You are in a frozen state in Chreshler's past.]

[You are experiencing the past from Chreshler's perspective.]

[You are in an observer state. You can't intervene in the past.]

Chreshler opened his mouth on behalf of Grid, "Can you make a coffin out of the sacred wood?"

Chreshler's past voice was different from the one Grid heard in reality. It was a much older and cracked voice. These must be Chreshler's last years.

"You don't fear the sacred wood?"

"I know enough and have handled the branches of the world tree several times. I believe that experience will help." Pagma's expression was confident as he answered.

Chreshler nodded as he sat down and stared at Pagma. "Okay. I will trust you since you are a person the fifth generation recommended."

Once permission was given, Pagma immediately started working. His movements to suppress the holy power of the sacred wood were careful and delicate but not too slow. Grid admired it.

'His workmanship is great.'

This was the person who developed skills in Grid with only knowledge. The process of turning a huge tree into a coffin seemed beautiful.

[The Sacred Wood Coffin production method has been acquired.]

[You have learned the techniques to handle the sacred wood.]

'...!'

He didn't know if it was useful, but it was an unexpected gain. As Grid rejoiced, time in the past flashed by, and Pagma completed the beautiful white coffin. Chreshler admired it. "Beautiful. It will be a good match with Marie Rose."

"Your Holiness."

"Is that title a habit? I am a retired pope."

"I have accomplished Your Holiness' wish and would like to ask for two things."

"You are a brave man. Okay. Tell me."

"I heard that Your Holiness held the funerals for the legends."

"So?"

"I want to know where they are buried."

"Why?"

"I also want to honor their souls."

'...!'

Grid's heart sank. He knew Pagma's intention behind finding the graves of the legends. The poor appearance of the Undefeated King and the legends who suffered for hundreds of years passed through Grid's mind.

'...No, no. It is a leap.'

At this time, Pagma wasn't Baal's Contractor. He didn't have the ability to make undead bodies. Pagma's intention might be as pure as he stated. A chill went over his skin as Grid tried to believe it. However, he felt uncomfortable because of Pagma's expression. Pagma had already predicted the future and was making preparations.

"Also..."

Pagma pulled out a sword. The Oriental longsword gave off a beautiful appearance.

"Teach me how to be strong."

A resource that must be learned properly in order to utilize the swordsmanship of the Undefeated King. Sword energy was at the end of Pagma's sword.

[Chapter 997](#)

Originally, fighting energy—the resource of the Hero King—only accumulated in battle. It was a great pressure for Grid to use the Undefeated King's Swordsmanship when it consumed fighting energy. Once his fighting energy dispersed and his stats fell, the danger was too great. Grid desperately wanted the 'sword energy' resource of a great swordsman.

Now at this moment...

'Sword energy!'

This was an opportunity to look at how Pagma used sword energy in the past. Grid sensed it.

'Sword energy will be released!'

So far, Grid had taken every opportunity to learn Pagma's skills. He had gained them from hidden pieces, murals, quests, and the Hall of Fame. Grid had been able to acquire Pagma's skills whenever he followed the arrangements Pagma had left behind. Then what about Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship?

It was a skill that had evolved using the goddess' blessing. Grid hadn't learned it through any knowledge or hints left behind by Pagma. This meant it was half-completed.

'I can't miss this opportunity!'

Grid's eyes widened. He hoped that in witnessing Pagma fighting Chreshler and understanding the Great Swordsman Pagma, Grid would be reborn as a genuine 'great swordsman.'

"Huhu, look at this guy who has committed unpardonable atrocities against humans."

Contrary to Grid's expectations, a battle didn't occur. It was because Chreshler stepped back.

"You want to point your sword at an old man who might die tomorrow? Hey, I'm 110 years old this year, 110. My blood pressure will elevate just from swinging the sword and I can die. Eh, you are a bad guy. I didn't know that you would use such means."

"..." Pagma, who had drawn his sword, showed no special reaction. He listened to Chreshler's unusual words and replied quietly, "If you might die tomorrow anyway, does it matter if you die today?"

"W-What?"

“Your Holiness, please be prepared to die and teach me.”

“Hah! I have never seen such a shameless fellow! The cooked stew doesn’t taste right, so you added some politeness and boiled it again? It is the first time in my life that I’ve met someone like you!”

“Your Holiness, the current peace isn’t eternal. If you die after the first pope, the power to suppress hell will disappear. The age of grief will occur again as the forces of the Yatan Church rise and the great demons run wild without fear.”

“You know that yet you still sealed our church’s three treasures?”

“It was a friend’s request.”

“A friend’s request? Huhu, what ludicrous words. An insane person like you has friends? You don’t know what loyalty is.”

“I will become stronger.”

“...?”

“I will become strong and defend the world without the need for the Rebecca Church and Franz. I was prepared for this, so I fulfilled my friend’s request. Please cooperate with me.” Pagma raised his sword.

Chreshler clicked his tongue. “Protecting the peace of this world alone? As the descendant of a fallen god, you are arrogant. Tsk, you yangbans.”

“I’m ignorant about the history of the yangbans. I have never thought of myself as the descendant of a god. I just want to save humanity as a human.”

“Then are you going to kill this old man right now? Is that really the duty of a human?”

“...Your sacrifice will become an opportunity to save tens of millions of people, so it is righteous and justified.”

“Kuk, kukukuk! You are an arrogant and selfish man!”

Chreshler’s anger was transmitted to Grid who was assimilated with him. Chreshler was disgusted with Pagma. “From a human’s perspective, you are out of line. You don’t feel it yourself?”

“I am ready to take the blame.”

“Shut up! Your thoughts aren’t as sublime as you think they are! You don’t know? You don’t know because you are a yangban! You aren’t in a position to speak for humans!”

“What is the difference between a yangban and a human? A yangban lives longer and has gained greater power, but they are no different from humans. Our minds, our aversion to evil, and our appearances are the same as humans. We even bleed like humans. Every human is equal, so I will fight for humans.”

“Crazy bastard. You are crazy. A crazy maniac who doesn’t know he is crazy. Oh, good. It is better for you to die here. It was too risky to keep you alive.”

It was close to a miracle. Chreshler's faith was like a sea that created infinite holy power. This holy power was exercised according to Chreshler's will. Hundreds of thousands of spears of light poured out. Pagma looked like his limbs were pierced, and it seemed like he would die instantly.

However, the reverse happened. Pagma had already completed two linked sword dances. It was a readable move because Grid currently shared Chreshler's vision.

"Flower Revolve."

'...! Grid was astonished. Hundreds of petals containing sword energy bloomed as they revolved. All the spears of light that aimed at Pagma returned to Chreshler. Chreshler set up a barrier of light to absorb the spears and was honestly amazed. "It is a curious swordsmanship. You are the best after Muller and the Undefeated King."

"I can't compare to them in swordsmanship. That's why I have to develop."

"Even by selling your soul to a great demon?"

"..."

"Kukuk, you aren't denying it."

This man was dangerous. He shouldn't be kept alive. Chreshler's intuition told him this. He believed that his last mission was to kill this distorted man in front of him.

"The pope said this. He wouldn't have chosen me as a successor if it wasn't for the crisis. My martial arts were always too weak that he didn't accept it. However, you are worse than me. You don't sympathize with anyone. You are insensitive to the suffering of those who are sacrificed for your purposes. I don't know if you were like this from the beginning or that you've changed but you are already evil."

Chreshler's body was covered with 12 colors of light. The sword and armor hanging on the war were wrapped in five colors of light and flew to Chreshler. He applied over 17 types of buffs to himself and his battle gear. A too powerful force shattered the ground and shook the building. As Chreshler's power overflowed, Grid felt naked. He could see the 'world that transcendents saw.'

-!

Time stopped. In a world where only light refraction occurred, Chreshler advanced by breaking through the stopped fragments in the air. As the distance between him and Pagma narrowed, Pagma's eyes didn't blink once. A sword that followed the light—it was only after it penetrated Pagma's shoulder three times that a sound was made belatedly, and blood splashed out. Grid saw the gushing blood that consisted of numerous 'droplets'.

'He avoided it?'

Grid gulped. Pagma clearly avoided the pope's sword that was fired like a flash of light. It was originally the heart that should be pierced, but the damage was minimized to one shoulder.

"..." Pagma's physical body started to strengthen. Blacksmith's Rage was a buff that Grid knew, but the other four buffs were unfamiliar. They could be skills that belonged to Pagma's items or Pagma's own skills.

-!

The swords continued to collide in the air, but there was no sound. The present world was like a paused movie. The blood that flowed from Pagma's shoulder froze as thousands of droplets in the air. Against this backdrop, Pagma and Chreshler moved and exchanged blows. The sounds could only be heard after the collision. In that gap, Pagma and Chreshler had already exchanged dozens of blows.

"Transcend Kill Flower."

"Transcended Linked Kill Wave Pinnacle."

"Linked Revolve Pinnacle."

"Linked Kill Revolve Pinnacle Chop."

"Linked Kill Flower."

"Transcended Pinnacle Kill Chop."

The sword dances continued constantly.

'Pagma admired the work of Dainsleif and Valhalla and gave an example. It is said that he showed off his swordsmanship while wearing Dainsleif, which has never been used by any hero. The beauty of it was unbelievable, and the swordsmanship seemed to pierce the sky, creating lightning.' The description that Albatino, Khan's ancestor, used to describe Pagma's swordsmanship came to Grid's mind.

A swordsmanship that pierced the sky—Grid had always thought it was an exaggeration. It was because there was a huge gap in the Pagma's Swordsmanship that he had learned and the description of Pagma's Swordsmanship. However, not now. This was the true Pagma's Swordsmanship.

"Cough!" Pagma, who was covered in wounds, struggled to stand up. Meanwhile, Chreshler had only allowed one blow, but he was staggering. He used heal to restore the wound, but the 17 buffs were coming to an end.

"Damn rotten thing," the pope's disbelieving voice emerged from Chreshler's mouth. He grumbled like a child, "Ah, I don't know! No! I quit!"

"Pant... Pant... Pant..." Pagma didn't have the energy to even speak.

It couldn't be helped because his magic and swordsmanship had reached the limit. Chreshler took off his armor. "It is hard. My body is heavy."

"Pant... Pant..."

"You really tried to kill me. Shit. It is sad to be old."

"Pant... Pant... Thank... Thank you..." Pagma, who had been holding on, finally flopped down. His fingertips were trembling. "Thank you for Your Holiness' teachings... More sword dances are available..."

"Tsk," Chreshler clicked his tongue. He was still worried. Chreshler thought that Pagma was dangerous and should be killed. However, he didn't want to be hurt by such a disaster. Eventually, Chreshler chose to flee.

'In any case, I'll die soon, so the fate should be borne by those left behind.'

Ah, he didn't know. He would just take a break. This was his last thought. Chreshler's consciousness was cut off. He had died. Chreshler's bluff that he would die if he did too much hadn't been an exaggeration. In his darkening vision...

"Go peacefully. I will respectfully enshrine your soul in the Sacred Wood Coffin."

Pagma's figure could be seen bowing politely. Then Grid returned to reality.

[The past experience is over!]

[You have seen and understood the Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship!]

[The title 'Great Swordsman' has been obtained.]

[The new resource 'Sword Energy' has opened because of the title effect.]

[The effect of the Sword Mastery skill has slightly increased due to the title effect.]

[The information of Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship has updated.]

[The fusion of sword dances has become relatively free.]

[When using a sword, the resource consumed will be changed from mana to sword energy.]

[The level of all sword dances has been reset to level 1 instead of being strengthened. The maximum level of all sword dances is three. However, the level of the fusion sword dances is fixed at one.]

[The new sword dance Flower has been learned.]

"..." Grid opened his eyes quietly in the coffin. He was licking his lips when Chreshler's voice entered his ears, -There's nothing special, right? That's all I know about Pagma. He is a bit crazy—a liar and the murderer of an old man.

"Ah, yes..."

There were too many parts to argue about that Grid turned away. He shook his head and rose from the coffin. Grid felt himself becoming stronger.

[Chapter 998](#)

Should he thank Rose Marie? Or should he thank the empire for making him depend on Marie Rose?

'I didn't expect to become stronger in this way.'

The past Grid had half given up on sword energy. The method to obtain it was too vague. However, he was helped by the events that took place when he came to strengthen his relationship with Marie Rose. Cause and effect—as always, the concept of connection became Grid's greatest strength and weapon.

'Now, let's see.'

Grid calmed down his joy and checked the information of the swordsmanship.

[Great Swordsman Pagma's Swordsmanship Lv. 1]

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

- * This effect is only applied when a sword type weapon is equipped.
- * Reduces the stride of the sword dance.
- * You can create five fusion sword dances.
- * Every time the skill level rises, the number of sword dances that can be created will increase.
- * With this skill effect, you can only create four linked sword dances.]

[Wave Lv. 1]

[Unleash a violent sword dance like a high and powerful wave.

Inflicts 325% of your attack power to all enemies within 5 meters and reduces all speeds by 50%.

- * A target that resists the affected state will only have a 19% reduction in movement speed.
- * Once a target blocks, the 'violent shockwave' effect will occur and potentially create an 'ignore defense' effect.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 80

Skill Cooldown Time: 2 minutes.]

[Restraint Lv. 1]

[A restrained and understated sword dance.

Overwhelms the surroundings. Nobody can approach you for 3.5 seconds.

- * A target that resists the status anomaly will have a low probability of being stopped for 0.1 to 0.3 seconds.
- * Not applicable to the undead.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 60

Skill Cooldown Time: 5 minutes.]

[Link Lv. 1]

[A dazzling sword dance that is like the wings of a butterfly.

Deals 900% of your attack power to a single target 20 times in total.

- * Takes one second to cast.
- * This skill isn't affected by attack speed.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 50

Skill Cooldown Time: 1 minute.]

[Kill Lv. 1]

[A killing sword that expresses hatred.

Deals 1,850% of your physical attack power to a single target. Once hit, the target will be given the 'bleeding' and 'despair' effects and the 'Disarm' effect will be temporarily applied.

* Disarm: The item effect won't apply for one second. However, this corresponds to the area that is hit.

* The bleeding and despair effects won't apply to targets that can resist abnormal statuses.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 100

Skill cooldown time: 10 minutes.]

[Pinnacle Lv. 1]

[A sword that expresses the essence of a warrior god.

Deals 900% of your attack power to a single target. This skill will ignore 65% of the target's defense.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 60

Skill Cooldown Time: 3 minutes.]

[Revolve Lv. 1]

[Like the eye of a storm, it is calm and powerful.

It seems to conform to the flow, but this is actually a lie.

Resists 100% of all attacks that hit within 1.2 seconds of being cast.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 50

Skill Cooldown Time: 1 minute and 30 seconds.]

[Drop Lv. 1]

[A sword dance that displays a grudge against the sky.

It is a deep and serene sword dance that informs the world of the authority of the fallen sky.

Inflicts 500% of your physical damage to all enemies within 5 meters of you, and there is a 50% chance of ignoring the enemy's status resistance. Deals an additional 400% damage to all divine beings.

That target that is hit can't attack and defense will decrease.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 80

Skill Cooldown Time: 6 minutes.]

[Flower Lv. 1]

[A sword dance that depicts fluttering petals.

Any marked target will be hit with 61% physical damage + 10% magic damage.

* One mark can be produced per two points of sword energy.

* Every time the target is hit, a mark will be left. A maximum of five marks can be stacked up.

* Any object seen with the eyes will be recognized as a target and a mark will be left. Only one mark can be left as a target effect.

* The duration of the mark is 10 seconds and this duration is updated every time a new mark is left within these 10 seconds.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 60

Skill Cooldown Time: 1 minute.]

[Transcend Lv. 1]

[A sword dance that transcends imagination.

Your attack power is doubled and your basic attacks will turn into ranged attacks.

Skill Usage Conditions: Have a sword type weapon equipped.

Skill Sword Energy Cost: 200

Skill Duration: 30 seconds.

Skill Cooldown Time: 40 minutes.]

[As the swordsmanship has been reorganized, all fused sword dances that have already been acquired have been reset.]

“Wow...”

It was more than he had expected. First of all, the changes to Wave and Drop were dazzling since they previously had comparatively low attack power and range.

If the range of the coverage was too narrow to reach the enemy, the efficiency would be low. Now, it had increased by several times and could be used more frequently. Additionally, the increased attack power meant it could deal a sufficient blow to strong enemies. It was also attractive that the movement speed of targets resistant to the abnormal status was lowered.

Drop hadn't changed in range, but its power had risen sharply and the probability of ignoring the status resistance had increased by 20%. The change in Restraint was noticeable since it had been obsolete in front of enemies with a higher status resistance. The probability and duration were low, but suppose the opponent was a legend like Kraugel... If he could block some of the opponent's movements, he could turn the tide of the battle.

'It is painful about the change in Link...'

Link was a skill with an excellent synergy with the Enlightenment Sword. Whenever Grid swung the sword at the highest speed, the number of strikes exceeded 30 times per second, greatly increasing the probability of the black flames exploding. Now it would always be limited to 20 times.

'If my attack speed was slow, the fixed number of attacks would be rather attractive.'

Well, he couldn't interpret it as a loss. The damage was greatly increased, and the cooldown had been reduced by as much as 30 seconds. On the other hand, the cooldown of Kill had increased by a minute, but the power was tremendously strong. The previous Kill dealt 1,500% attack power at level one, but the new Kill boasted 1,850% attack power at level one. The health cost penalty was also removed. More than anything, the effect of Disarm was fraudulent.

'Once I use Kill, I can literally send them to death.'

Kill, which had been one of the best single target skills, was now reborn as a deadly blow. Pinnacle had also increased in damage and defense reduction effect. The effect of Transcend was the same as before, but the cooldown had decreased by 10 minutes. Given that Transcend was one of the best skills, the 10 minute reduction in cooldown was a transcendent benefit.

However, Grid's favorite part was the change in Revolve. Previously, he had 0.5 seconds to counterattack the enemy's attacks, but now it was increased to 1.2 seconds, making it make easier to utilize. The cooldown was also reduced by 30 seconds.

'Originally, it had a two minute cooldown at level one, so I felt regretful...'

The application of counterattacking in battle was endless. It was the strongest variable and threat. Grid felt reassured now that the cooldown time was greatly reduced.

'By the way...'

The essential problem was the newly opened sword dance, Flower. A skill that exerted the optimal power only when he left as many marks as possible on the target and considered the time. It was a skill that had to be used when 'thinking', and Grid already suffered at the thought.

'Wait?'

Didn't Pagma instantly target the hundreds of spears of light? ...Meaning it was possible to perfectly counterattack with Flower Revolve?

'Is it surprisingly easy?'

Grid recognized the distant rocks as targets. However, terrain and land couldn't be recognized as targets. He tried to use Chreshler as a target but stopped because he was afraid it would cause a misunderstanding that led to him being beaten up again. He was about to ask Chreshler to summon the spears of light but stopped because he really would die. In the end, Grid summoned Randy, the Overgeared Skeletons, and Noe and recognized them as targets, but allies couldn't be recognized as targets.

'Ah, damn.'

He wanted to test it out right now. Grid was feeling irritated when he sighed.

'Thinking about it, there would be an uproar if allies could be recognized as targets. It is fortunate that my allies aren't aware of it.'

Grid asked Chreshler for his understanding, "Can I leave for a moment and come back?"

-You don't have to come back.

"...You are cruel."

Affinity with the coffin had increased, but it was only by three points. Chreshler wasn't particularly interested in Grid, but Grid was tough.

"I'll be right back. I'll leave the kids here in case you fall asleep."

-You want to leave these creatures in front of a pope? Have you ever heard of the saying, 'Leaving a virgin to a vampire'?

"They will leave, and the light elemental will remain."

Grid left Chreshler behind and flew into the forest near the cave. Then he quickly recognized the monsters in the forest as targets.

"What is easy..."

It wasn't easy to recognize dozens of monsters that were moving continuously and changing the positions as targets. In fact, it was difficult to target specific opponents when facing a large number of enemies.

'Pagma is just great.'

Grid was indignant when he realized the truth.

'Dammit, this game is too difficult.'

The difficulty of the new skill was higher than expected, and his complaints accumulated. Nevertheless, Grid didn't lose his motivation. He would work hard until he could make the best use of Flower in the future.

"Sigh."

Grid looked at the changed effects of the skills and became familiar with them. He took deep breaths to calm his mind and returned to the coffin. A small light elemental was circling around Chreshler. It was easy to see its respect toward the holy power.

'A cute guy.'

Grid smiled at the lovely scene of the light elemental and finally noticed the biggest change. The biggest change was naturally his ability to fuse sword dances. In the past, he had to combine the sword dances directly and the success would be determined by the system. Now, he was intentionally able to get the sword dances he desired. There were five of them!

'I can have five fusion skills that have four sword dances fused!'

The excited Grid immediately wanted to create the fusion sword dances. He wanted to fill the skill window with four fused sword dances. However, Grid was no longer a fool. He was cautious, and he wasn't foolish enough to experience another failure like when he made Failure.

'First of all, let's check sword energy.'

Grid checked his status window. The level 390 character window that was filled with 90% experience unfolded in front of his eyes. In addition to health, mana and fighting energy, a resource called sword energy was added.

[Sword Energy: 1,000.]

"1,000?"

This was really surprising. It was quite generous unlike his worries. The maximum value of 1,000 wasn't bad considering the new Pagma's Swordsmanship only consumed ~50–100 points, with only Transcend consuming 200 points.

'Is the effect of the Ring of Absurdity applied here?'

It was a ring that reduced resource consumption by 50%. The effect of the item was as absurd as its name, but it just so happened to not be applied to fighting energy. The Hero King was a unique existence, so it was likely a special resource that only applied to the Hero King.

On the other hand, Grid knew approximately 10 people who were great swordsmen. Grid anticipated that Ring of Absurdity would apply to sword energy. It was as he had expected. Grid tested the effect of the Ring of Absurdity by using Link, and the sword energy consumed was reduced by half.

'Good!'

It was amazing. Seriously, it was too amazing.

'The four fused sword dances will be around 500 sword energy, so the actual consumption is approximately 250. All five slots will be four fused sword dances... No, that's too bad.'

Grid paid attention to the recovery of sword energy. Every time the sword was swung, one point of sword energy was restored. There was no explanation for natural recovery. It also meant there might be

situations where recovery wasn't feasible, just like fighting energy. If he was greedy and only created four fused sword dances, the increased consumption might ruin him.

'The four fusion sword dances also have a long cooldown time. In order to utilize the swordsmanship efficiently, it is better not to be obsessed with the four fused sword dances. I should also create two fused and three fused sword dances.'

The first fusion sword dances that Grid came up with were Linked Resolve and Flower Revolve. Linked Resolve was a skill that could be counterattacked several times while Flower Revolve could aim for more counterattacks depending on the situation. Grid's expectations were high, but the difficulty of using Flower Revolve was overwhelming.

'If it was Kraugel, he would surely learn Flower Revolve.'

Kraugel's insight, judgment, and physical ability would definitely allow him to take full advantage of Flower Revolve. However, Grid wasn't Kraugel. His control might be at ranker level, but he couldn't compare with the best control skills. Feeling troubled, Grid shook his head.

'An easy-to-use skill means that it is simple and easy to be targeted.'

The excuse that he wasn't talented didn't work anymore. Talented monsters could be filled everywhere in the world where Grid walked. Grid had to develop further and was forced to choose Flower Revolve.

[The new fusion sword dance Flower Revolve has been created.]

[The number of times a fused sword dance can be created is four times.]

'Next...'

Grid was about to create another fusion sword dance.

-How long are you going to stand here absent-mindedly?

"...?"

-Weren't you wondering about who else woke me up? Isn't that why you asked me to stay awake until you came back? Don't you want me to tell you? I-I am sleepy. Should I go to sleep?

Grid hurriedly waved his hands. "No! What is the identity of the person? Please let me know who it is."

-That person...

Chreshler's answer was unexpected.

The Overgeared Kingdom concentrated their forces in Reidan because there was sufficient basis for it. The empire was blocked by the water clan in the sea and were forced to use the sea route. The empire had to break through Reidan to invade by land.

That's right. The empire's only route was Reidan, so the Overgeared Kingdom concentrated their forces in Reidan. However, there was a variable—Sky King Rigal. (Changed from Punching King) He was one of the seven dukes of the empire, and the air force he led was able to penetrate through the anti-air

surveillance of the Overgeared Kingdom and enter their territory. A huge 5,000 griffons and 300 wyverns appeared over Bairan, and the Overgeared members and people of Bairan were in chaos.

“Destroy everything,” Rigal ordered, and the wyvern’s let out breaths while the troops on the griffon pulled out their spears.

“Kuaaaaak!”

It was a village that had a long bond with Grid. No, Bairan that had been upgraded to a city was now on fire. People screamed while the Overgeared members turned to ash. The first knight that Grid obtained was Jude. Even the highly respected head of Bairan’s security, Jude was helpless in front of the air force’s one-sided attack. A smile appeared on Rigal’s face as he fired a bow and easily defeated two Overgeared members.

“Take the enemies captive and take away all the food. The people will become slaves.”

The Overgeared Kingdom was in crisis. The horrible scene was captured by the cameras of broadcasting companies from all over the world.

[Chapter 999](#)

“I’m curious about the identity of this person!”

It was a place where two giants that shook the foundations of the continent were asleep. There were few places as special, even if the entire continent were searched. Thus, Grid was obsessed. A person who visited this place ahead of himself—Grid wanted to know their identity.

‘An ordinary person can’t endure Marie Rose’s evil influence. The first visitor must not be a normal person.’

It must be a presence similar to a legend. What was their identity, and why did they come here? Perhaps it would be profitable if the hidden story was heard. Information was power. This was the calculation of a seasoned player, and fortunately, Chreshler was cooperative.

-It was Muller.

“Muller? Ah, Muller? Sword Saint Muller?”

-Yes.

“Right... Huh?” Grid had been nodding only to stiffen like he was hit by a lightning bolt. Sword Saint Muller, the strongest human being—he was rated as the strongest among all the legends, not just the past legends. Grid was moved at the thought of hearing his story.

Then he had a question. ‘Wait... Muller is a person from the era before Pagma. Yet he visited here? Isn’t it right for Muller to have died before this place existed?’

The precise birth date of Sword Saint Muller hadn’t been recorded. However, Muller’s period of activity recorded in official history coincided with the activities of the first pope. From approximately 320–400 years ago, he was the protagonist who sealed the great demons and ended the era of grief, dying around 250 years ago.

“How many years ago was it?” Grid asked the question.

-It was around 160 years ago? Chreshler gave a shocking answer.

‘Wasn’t that the age when Pagma was active? Ah!’ Grid noticed. ‘Muller also lived for hundreds of years like Pagma!’

In retrospect, someone said that Muller died 150 years ago. Grid thought it was distorted information at the time. Then he recalled Pagma who had lived for hundreds of years and thought he had likely lived through some type of technique.

‘Pagma didn’t know that.’

Pagma had thought that Muller was dead. If he had known that Muller was alive, he would’ve chosen to cooperate with Muller rather than contract with a great demon.

-I’ve told you, right? I’m going to sleep. It feels lonely to wake up in a world without Marie Rose.

“W-Wait a minute! Why did Muller come here 160 years ago? Additionally, when did he die?”

-You have a lot to say. Why do you want so much without giving anything in return? Pagma made this coffin but what did you do? Don’t you have any shame?

“...!” Grid was stung.

He was reminded that Chreshler had no reason to be favorable to him.

-I’m sleeping. Bye.

“W-Wait...!”

Chreshler shouldn’t leave this way. Grid had to hear the backstory. With this in mind, Grid shouted, “I know where Marie Rose is!”

Chreshler’s reaction was surprisingly lukewarm. -I know. She is somewhere in the vampire cities. So what? Will you bring her? Can you bring her?

“...”

-Don’t spit out words that you can’t handle. You can suffer the wrath of a fierce anger.

“...I’m sorry.”

-Hmm... You have done enough good deeds to merit the blessings of the goddess of light and the three churches, so I will give you a bit more kindness. Okay. I’ll tell you what you want to know. Do you know Amoract?

“The great demon? He is the First Servant of the Yatan Church.”

-So, you already know.

The demon of conflict, Amoract—Grid had the experience of meeting his soul. The first time Grid lent his body to Braham, Braham visited Amoract and the pavranium received Yatan’s Blessing. Grid couldn’t forget the menacing presence that had emitted from just the fragment of a soul.

-He was afraid of Marie Rose.

“Huh...?”

Marie Rose was strong enough to ignite fear in a great demon?

-One of the nine great demons who deprived Beriache of her great demon status and deported the vampire clan from hell was Amoract. Since he directly took over controlling the activities of the Yatan Church, Beriache was an obvious risk factor.

“...!” Grid recalled the contents of the conversation between Braham and Amoract. It had already been a few years, but he vaguely remembered the conversation because it had been an impressive meeting.

“You were aware that I would look for you.”

[Of course. Braham needs the blessings of the gods to escape from his mortal body.]

“Will you give me Yatan’s Blessing?”

[That’s right.]

“Kukukuk, the Yatan Church seems to be hostile to Marie Rose.”

[God Yatan favors you, regardless of Marie Rose. Always remember this point.]

God Yatan was against Marie Rose. Braham had clearly said so. An opponent that bothered even the god of evil...

It wasn’t strange that one great demon was afraid of her.

‘Marie Rose is a much stronger presence than I expected. Amoract and Yatan gave Braham strength because they wanted Braham to keep her in check.’

Grid’s mind was elevated after realizing new facts. He felt he was getting closer to the world view, that he was becoming a special existence. Chreshler’s explanation continued.

-So, Amoract used Muller. He’s good at scheming. He spread the rumor that if Marie Rose wasn’t completely destroyed, she would work with the great demons to destroy humans. This reached the ears of Muller who was retired. The vampires were the main enemies of the school at the time. Muller didn’t have a chance to deal with vampires and didn’t understand the race called vampires. Thus, he believed the rumor and came to this place.

“It was to completely destroy Marie Rose.”

-Yes. Then he went back. I explained it well and sent him back.

“Excuse me... Your Holiness. How did Muller stay alive until then? Did he take away the lifespan of others or contract with a great demon?”

-You really don’t understand legends. A legend is an existence that became a legend due to the ‘feats’ that they built up. Legends don’t die easily as long as they aren’t forgotten by people.

“...!”

A message window flashed through Grid's mind.

[A legend doesn't die easily.]

This was the moment he understood the background of the skill. Yet it raised another question. "However... Khan... was a great blacksmith that I knew couldn't overcome the limitations of life even if he became a legend. He died as soon as he became a legend. I also haven't heard that other legends have lived for hundreds of years except for Pagma."

-He didn't build up feats that people never stopped talking about. Moreover, production classes like blacksmith are difficult to obtain the benefits of their feats. People focus on the works they create, not the person who created them. Should I give you an example that is easy to understand? The man called the Undefeated King. He was the owner of a combat power that wasn't inferior to Sword Saint Muller and was never defeated in a solo battle. However, these activities were confined to his homeland.

"...?"

-His feats were only spoken about by his people, not the whole continent. It means his fame was weak and his status as a legend fell. He died in the hands of the Saharan Empire, but if he didn't die, he wouldn't have lived for long.

"Ah..." Grid understood somewhat. As a player, he was able to receive the benefits of immortality as soon as he became a legend, but the inhabitants of this world were different.

'This...'

The first people Grid thought about were Piaro and Mercedes. Grid had stopped them from participating in combat as much as possible because he was afraid they would be in danger. Now it turned out not to be a wise move.

'In order to keep them alive for a long time, it is necessary for them to engage in many battles and build up feats.'

In particular, Mercedes was the problem. Piaro's farming could build up a certain amount of feats, but Mercedes was a knight. She was supposed to be on the battlefield to build up her feats.

"Why didn't Pagma know about the concept of a legend? He believed that Muller was dead."

-Even though he understood the concept, he wouldn't have doubted Muller's death. No legend has as many feats as Muller, and there is no precedent for a legend who has lived as long as Muller. Who would've imagined that Muller would be alive for hundreds of years? I didn't imagine it until I saw him myself.

"Is Muller still alive?"

-No, Chreshler asserted, -He is dead. The world is constantly changing, and new things constantly occur. People are interested in new characters rather than praising a person who lived a long time ago. The number of times Muller was talked about decreased.

"..." Grid got goosebumps.

The formula of 'being forgotten is true death' was unusually cruel. He imagined Muller dying in solitude. Then Chreshler laughed. He was aware of what Grid was thinking. -Haha, it doesn't make sense to be completely forgotten just because the number of times he is talked about has decreased. Aren't we talking about Muller now? How many times have you heard Muller's story while you've been alive?

Grid had heard it dozens or hundreds of times. Yes, Muller wasn't completely forgotten nor did he die in solitude. It would be stranger if he couldn't die after being talked about for every minute and second. Muller had been lonelier and more bitter when he was alone. He would've been the happiest at the end of his life.

Chreshler's voice was mild throughout Muller's story. Even Chreshler sincerely respected Muller. Maybe it was because Muller's story made him feel better but Chreshler comforted Grid.

-The great blacksmith you mentioned. You called him 'Khan'?

"Yes... That's right."

The name 'Khan' emerged from 2nd Pope Chreshler's mouth. Grid felt somewhat overwhelmed and excited as Chreshler kindly told him, -The fact that he couldn't overcome the limitations of life means that he enjoyed his natural life. It would've been a great blessing for him to leave when he had to leave. Imagine if he was forced to live as long as Muller. How old and lonely would he be?

"...Your Holiness is right. Khan was happy at the last minute."

Khan had become a legend and fallen asleep in Grid's arms. He had also been reunited with his family. Yes, he would've been satisfied. He would've been happy.

'Khan. Are you watching? Chreshler is talking about you. You have really come a long way. You must feel good.'

Grid gained consolation thanks to Chreshler and smiled warmly. Simultaneously...

[Affinity with Chreshler has increased by 10.]

An unexpected notification window popped up.

-You seem to have no concept, but your nature is good. I like it a bit.

Chreshler gave him a good (?) evaluation. Grid was happy. Chreshler might be a coffin now, but he was still one of the greatest figures in history. Grid felt reassured about gaining affinity with him.

-Now I really will go to sleep.

Grid was about to bow to Chreshler when he suddenly had another question. "He isn't a legend. Then what is a person who has lived for hundreds of years despite humans not speaking of his feats? Is he not human in the first place?"

-You are really annoying, Chreshler grumbled. Still, he explained, -He is either non-human or a transcendent.

Transcendent...! Grandmaster Zikfrector was close to a transcendent.

“What exactly is a transcendent? How are they different from legends?”

-The thing that both legends and transcendents have in common is that they have talent that transcends the category of humans. However, legends build up a presence through their feats while transcendents only concentrate on their own discipline. They can get a long life depending on what they trained and studied.

“Is a legend better than a transcendent?”

-If it is merely a discussion on their abilities, a transcendent is generally better than a legend. The legend wanders around here and there, wasting their time on solving problems. Meanwhile, transcendents only spend time on their own development. Of course, a legend's experience is a strength, so there are many legends that are overwhelmingly stronger than transcendents. A typical example is Muller.

“...Then that means transcendents are usually selfish?”

-Who knows? Are they selfish because they don't fight for world peace or development? Don't you know? Sometimes it isn't good to be conspicuous? Well, I'm sure they're missing some screws.

“Missing screws?”

-Most things that aren't consistent with their purpose are ignored. From a general point of view, they might seem like a person who isn't motivated or gives up easily. If it wasn't for Marie Rose, I wouldn't have received the position of 2nd Pope.

“...”

Why did the grandmaster simply retreat in the evil eyes' village? One question was resolved, but Grid had a new question. Transcendent Zikrefector... Why did he serve the empire if he had no loyalty to the empire?

‘What is his purpose?’

It was uncomfortable. Grid was locked in deep thought when he saw the guild chat window. An exclamation point had popped up. It meant there was a notice.

“...!”

Grid's eyes shone as he verified the contents of the notice.

“Whose statue is this?”

Sky King Rigal occupied Bairan in less than half a day. He stood in front of a large statue in the square and cocked his head. It was the statue of a kind old man. His eyes were blazing like flames, but he had a friendly smile. The old man's hand was holding a hammer.

“My lord is asking you something!”

When no one answered, Rigal's soldiers lashed out and started beating the prisoners. The prisoners were the Overgeared soldiers who had been defeated and captured in battle. They had failed to fulfill

their duty to protect Bairan and had to suffer the humiliation of being taken prisoner. Still, they felt determined not to answer the enemy's questions, even if they were beaten to death.

Rigal scoffed, "Isn't a statue meaningless? A country with no history is putting up a statue of a fictional person?"

When Rigal touched the statue in a mocking manner, one of the prisoners roared, "Hand. Put it away. Now!"

It was an Overgeared knight bound by chains. His name was Jude. He was great in battle, and catching him had been one of the hardest challenges in this battle.

"Hrmm." A smile emerged on Rigal's face. He looked gorgeous in the air force uniform with matted silver hair and blood-like red eyes. Rigal looked favorably at Jude. "If I listen to your request, will you become my subordinate?"

Rigal coveted Jude, who was a knight with excellent physical abilities, despite his low intelligence.

Wasn't Jude a great person to have as a subordinate? An alpha dog who wouldn't bite his owner no matter what...

Jude shook his head. "Jude. Only master. Overgeared King. One minute."

Look, just like this.

"I will give you better treatment. It will be much better than the Overgeared King."

It was impossible to give better treatment than the Overgeared King. Jude could become strong thanks to Grid's efforts and attention. It was Grid who had discovered and trained his talent. If Grid hadn't made items suitable for Jude's characteristics, the current Jude wouldn't exist.

Jude existed because of Grid. Without Grid, Jude was like a flat steamed bun, an account without any balance. However, Rigal didn't know the situation. After all, he was one of the strongest powers of the Saharan Empire. So, he believed that he had the best resources and power on the continent and was much better than the Overgeared King.

One of the Overgeared members laughed. "You don't understand the subject."

The youth shouting in a loud voice was Ibellin. He was in charge of Bairan on behalf of Jishuka, who was in Reidan. Ibellin had fought desperately throughout the battle but was eventually captured. He had sacrificed his life to cut down the enemies, died, resurrected, and fought again. However, Bairan was still occupied.

Ibellin couldn't forgive himself. He cursed Rigal for trampling on Bairan's land.

"You will give more than Grid? It is impossible even if you cut off your head and offer it..."

Ibellin's words didn't last long. It was because Rigal approached and cut off Ibellin's head. Notification windows popped up as Ibellin's vision turned gray.

[You have died.]

[You have lost 35.6% experience.]

[You have lost an additional 10% experience from the war penalty.]

[The person who killed you has applied the 'Poison to Immortal' effect. You have lost 10% more experience.]

[You have died twice in 24 hours, resulting in a restricted access penalty.]

The war penalty was expected and convincing. It wasn't unreasonable to lose experience because they were able to gain experience in the war. However, Poison to Immortals was unexpected and the worst poison. A total loss of an extra 20% experience. It was like hell.

'It is dangerous. It is really dangerous. Everyone, be careful...'

Ibellin turned to gray. Anger appeared on the faces of the Overgeared members while the soldiers and residents were terrified. Jude roared, "Kill you!"

It was a meaningless struggle. Jude's struggle just caused the chains to become tighter. Rigal dismissed him and directly read the words on the statue.

[Bronze Statue of Khan, Legendary Blacksmith]

[A great blacksmith who dedicated his life to creating countless weapons and armor for the Overgeared Kingdom.

My teacher, friend, and family.

-Overgeared King Grid-]

"Hoh? The rumored person..."

The empire's intelligence network was excellent. It was impossible for them to not know about Khan, who had been closest to Grid.

'It wouldn't be strange even if statues of him were placed all over the kingdom.'

The person called Khan had very great meaning for the Overgeared King and his people. Rigal knew this fact and ordered, "Break the statue and throw it into the river."

"No! Don't do it!" Jude was becoming more and more berserk. His skin that was touching the chains was red, blood flowed onto the iron, and his hair became matted. Now even the soldiers and residents felt anger instead of fear. Someone begged him not to do this, but Rigal didn't take back the command.

As the statue crumbled, Rigal declared, "The empire will thoroughly restructure this place. All symbols of the Overgeared Kingdom will be burned, and your spirit will be trampled on. Resent being born into a powerless nation and conform to the will of power."

[Chapter 1000](#)

The imperial air forces have raided Bairan.

The altitude of their air force is higher than the information we had stated.

The anti-air surveillance and defense facilities throughout the Overgeared Kingdom are useless.

The imperial air forces have occupied Bairan.

The contents of the notice listed sequentially were short but contained the essence. The worst situation was clearly depicted to be currently happening in Bairan. There were currently approximately 1,000 Overgeared members. Most of the members scattered throughout the kingdom rushed to Bairan as soon as they confirmed the notice. They hoped to be of help.

However, the result didn't change.

'It was captured in only half a day?'

Originally belonging to Winston, Bairan had developed into a city larger than Winston and gained independence. Bairan had geographical advantages and was a special place for Grid and the early Overgeared members. This meant it received a lot of investments. Piaro had stayed there for a while to develop the agriculture, making it the most important supply base for the Overgeared Kingdom apart from Reidan. It inevitably meant there were many troops stationed at Bairan.

Although it could be classified as the outskirts of the north, Lauel knew the importance of the supply base and had 8,000 troops stationed in Bairan as preparation for unforeseen situations. Additionally, he had deployed 25 mid-to-upper level Overgeared members led by Ibellin. Yet, Bairan had been occupied in only half a day.

'The strength of the empire's air force exceeded expectations.'

Of course, they knew that one of the strongest armies in the empire was the air force. It was a terrible sight to see 5,000 griffons and 300 wyverns. How powerful would it be when the scary monsters were used as a systematic army? Lauel had identified the air force as one of their greatest challenges and carefully reviewed the performance of Sky King Rigal, who had been promoted over the years.

He had concluded that only the elite members could go against the air force and proceeded to install anti-air facilities across the kingdom. For a long time, enormous capital was invested in anti-air surveillance and defense facilities. The levels of facilities such as watchtowers, anti-air cannons, magic watchtowers, magic turrets, and so on were all level 10. Nevertheless, this was the result. Their money was spent in vain.

'Dammit, this is X.'

The maximum level of the facilities recognized by the administration system was 10. All facilities in the kingdom couldn't exceed level 10 unless the kingdom was upgraded to an empire. That's right. The anti-air facilities of the Overgeared Kingdom were the best possible, but they were useless against the imperial air force...? If Grid had known this, he wouldn't have spent money in the first place.

'Was I feeding the company money again?'

Wasn't setting the imperial air force—the strongest air force on the continent—against players a scam? Grid cursed the S.A Group before soon rebuking himself.

'No, it is my fault in the end. Lauel emphasized the dangers of the air force. This wouldn't have happened if I made my own cannons.'

Grid did not know how to make magic turrets, but he could produce anti-air cannons. The power of the cannons produced by Grid was naturally stronger than ordinary ones. Yet Grid had turned away under the pretext of being busy. He should've expected that the empire's air force was called the strongest on the continent because they contained a power that overwhelmed existing air defense systems, but he hadn't felt that way. Instead, he had believed it was more efficient to strengthen the guild members' items than to construct facilities. His way of thinking was too narrow.

"There is an urgent matter, so I have to leave. I am grateful to you. I wish you all the best until the next time we meet."

-I am already dead. Bring Marie Rose or don't come back.

Grid respectfully said goodbye to Chreshler and used the return scroll. However, the scroll didn't work because of Marie Rose's evil influence. In the end, he left the cave and moved to a place that wasn't affected by Marie Rose's evil influence. He was in a hurry. Then a person suddenly popped up in his mind. 'Jude!'

Grid's first knight—he wasn't a named NPC, which meant he had few unique stories. Born in Winston, Jude had strong bones but his intelligence was low. Jude's setting was summarized with this simple line. Therefore, Grid wasn't deeply involved in Jude's life unlike how he was with Piaro, Asmophel, and Mercedes. Jude's intelligence was too low, and a normal conversation couldn't be shared.

However, they shared a lot of time and memories. There had few conversations with each other, but they had a deep spiritual connection and knew each other well enough to read their hearts with their eyes. Jude's power and potential were low compared to the other knights', but Grid treasured and trusted him. It was proof of Grid's trust that he left the security of an important city like Bairan to Jude. That faith had become poison.

"Knights Summoning!"

Jude was in danger. Maybe he was dying right now. Grid was on the verge of losing his reason at the thought. The days he had spent with Jude passed through his mind like a kaleidoscope.

[Please select an article to summon.]

"Jude!" Grid's big shout rang out through the forest. Grid desperately wanted Jude to appear before him. However, it was impossible. Jude didn't respond to his summons.

"Jude?"

Grid became more and more irritated as he quickly escaped from the scope of the evil influence. Immediately after using the return scroll, he went to see Sticks.

The statue of Khan rolled across the ground as dozens of fragments, and Rigal stepped on them one by one. Rigal's ruthless violence crushed Khan's hammer, arms, feet, and legs in front of the people.

"Don't! No!" Jude's shaking became worse. Every time Rigal erased part of Khan's image, Jude struggled, and more blood poured from his body tied by chains.

“I can’t do this? No, I can do it. This is already the empire’s territory. I have an obligation to cleanse this city prior to offering it to His Majesty the Emperor, and you—the loser—have no right to exercise your will.”

Rigal’s air force served as the vanguard of the empire. Just like in most battles, he captured the enemy and destroyed their will before the main force came forward. Rigal was a veteran. He knew how to break down the spirit of the enemies and adapt to change. The very first step was the destruction of a symbol. Mechanically, Rigal trampled on the shoulders of the statue as he turned his eyes toward the granary on the ridge far away.

Rigal’s next target was the life, sweat, treasure, and hope of the Bairan people.

‘It is a shame, but burning it is better.’

During the war, it was ideal to take food from enemy camps to replenish their own supplies. However, Rigal’s air force was few in number and had to carry prisoners. They couldn’t afford to transport food as well. There was no guarantee that they could definitely defend this place until the empire’s main force arrived. He couldn’t overlook the fact that this city was in the middle of the Overgeared Kingdom.

Therefore, Rigal chose destruction. The tied-up knight was shaking more fiercely as he tried to break the chains binding his hands and feet. Rigal looked at the scene. Then he raised his foot over the last remaining piece of the statue. It was the head—the head of the statue that represented a person called Khan.

“In the near future, your king’s head will be at my feet like this. Discard your foolish expectations and surrender to the empire. The people who surrender right now won’t be enslaved and will be accepted as a person of the empire, receiving proper treatment from the soldiers. Don’t miss the chance to enjoy the mercy and protection of His Majesty the Emperor.”

Rigal increased the strength of his foot. Khan’s face cracked slightly.

“No...!”

“No!”

Blood burst in Jude’s eyes as he tried to break the chains. Since the time he was a soldier of Winston, Jude couldn’t have dreamed of a better life than what he received after King Grid stretched out his hand to him. King Grid didn’t care about Jude’s stupidity and gave him many things. Grid was his benefactor. Rather than paying him back, Jude had to watch Grid’s family be insulted?

“I don’t like iiiit!” Jude roared while shedding tears of blood. His intelligence was low, so his thoughts were simple. It was because his thoughts were simple that his will was more clearly pronounced. He had to destroy the enemy in front of him. In order to do that, he needed to break free of these restraints.

The ultimate will was simple and clear, and it dominated Jude’s mind and body. Ignoring the pressure of the hard shackles, Jude’s wrist moved and finally broke in a strange direction. The eight bones sustaining his wrist and the bones of the hands were crushed without overcoming the pressure of the chains. Jude’s completely squashed left hand drooped and slipped through a small gap in the chains.

“What are you going to do with a hand that can’t even hold a fork?” Rigal asked as he was surprised by Jude’s ignorant behavior.

“Kuoong...” Jude slipped his left hand through a gap in the chains and gripped. He gritted his teeth and used all his strength to rip off the chains.

“What?”

Most of the bones and nerves were damaged yet he still had strength in his hands? Wasn’t it almost magical?

“Hat...! Kuhahahat! A great guy!” Rigal burst out laughing. He coveted Jude even more. Rigal was convinced there were few people as strong in the empire.

Jude finally stood up and shouted at Rigal, “The feet. Remove it.”

“Are you going to join me?” Rigal asked.

Jude shook his head. “Don’t want. You. Bad.”

“Then it can’t be helped.” Rigal increased the strength of his feet. The statue’s face was crushed.

Jude let out a sound that was close to a scream, then he rushed toward Rigal. Blood flowed all over his body, his hand hung down, and his hair was matted. He seemed no different from a giant running over.

“Crazy bastard!”

Rigal’s soldiers were instantly shaken. They didn’t think of stopping Jude and hid themselves behind shields.

“Jude! Run away!” The Overgeared members shouted. However, Jude ignored them and ran straight forward. He just moved with his own ideals. His will couldn’t be changed.

[The king you made the pledge of loyalty to has called you.]

[The miracle of the pledge is manifested as space movement.]

“Ohhhhhh!”

It had happened previously when he was taking a bath. Jude had responded to the king’s call while naked. At that time, the king had told him to check his condition before responding to the summons. Thus, Jude didn’t respond immediately to Grid’s call this time. In fact, he wasn’t thinking of anything. He just thought that he should destroy Rigal.

Jude’s big fist struck Rigal’s face. No, it seemed to hit. Beyond the shockwave caused by the collision, Jude’s fist was caught in Rigal’s hand. It was almost impossible for the level 390 Jude to punch Rigal, who was already level 439 when Grid saw him a year and a half ago. Of course, this was for a normal situation.

“This time I’ll have to lock you up.” Rigal stated while holding Jude’s fist.

“...?!” Then Rigal suffered from an unexpected blow. Jude’s left hand—its bones were shattered yet the hand still flew at Rigal’s mouth. It was a completely unexpected attack, and Rigal was forced to allow it. Of course, the damage was zero.

“Indeed... It isn’t easy to tame a beast. A strict education is needed.”

Rigal had treated Jude well, but his expression became ugly for the first time. A duke of the Saharan Empire—it was hard for him to maintain compassion when he, a representative of the emperor and one of the top powers in the empire, was assaulted. This was the moment when he pulled out his whip.

Jude was a man who had tasted despair a thousand times but didn’t feel frustrated because he had no thoughts. Now, he wasn’t frustrated because he had a single thought in his heart.

“...?”

An unknown message seeped into Grid’s ears as he was at Reinhardt.

[The skill of your knight Jude ‘I have no Idea (SS-) has evolved to ‘Frustration Raises a Man (SS)!]

[Your knight Jude has been enhanced by the skill effect of Frustration Raises a Man (SS)!]

There was a series of alerts.

“W-What?” Grid was confused.

In Bairan, Jude was swinging his left hand again. Jude’s ragged left hand was restored and the power and speed were incomparable to before. Rigal wasn’t able to grab Jude’s left hand using his hand and had to wield his whip.

‘What?’

Rigal, his soldiers, the Overgeared members, the residents, and the staff of the international broadcasters filming the scene were stunned. Only Jude swung his fists without thinking.

1. Jude.
2. Grid’s first knight.
3. Instant recovery ability.
4. NPC worldly wisdom method.
5. NPC’s sudden strength.
6. How to obtain a NPC subordinate.
7. Where is Grid?

The popular search queries for portal sites in different countries started to change.